TBT 07-14-2025 Competent Person - Excavation Site

SCS Toolbox Talk: **The Role of the Competent Person on an Excavation Site-**[Reference 1926 Subpart P]

Every action you take on an excavation site could have negative impacts on the safety of yourself or others. Digging in an area without first locating underground utilities could cause serious disruption of service, and maybe even an electrocution or explosion. Entering a trench that does not have a properly constructed protective system could result in you being caught in a sudden cave-in. And entering an excavation containing a hazardous atmosphere could prove to be deadly as well. Because of these and other hazards associated with excavation work, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, also called OSHA, requires organizations like ours to designate someone at the excavation site to be responsible for performing critical functions to ensure the safety of our workers. And that person is known as the "**Competent Person**".

Here is an overview of just a few of the major duties performed by the Competent Person at an excavation site:

The Competent Person analyzes the soil and other conditions at the excavation site to determine whether we must utilize some form of protective system, such as sloping, shoring, or a trench box, to prevent workers from being caught in a cave-in when we are working inside certain excavations.

The Competent Person determines that any protective system we do utilize is adequate in terms of strength and suitability for the excavation where it is being utilized, and that it is properly installed, moved, and removed throughout the course of the job.

The Competent Person also conducts regular inspections of the excavation sites, protective systems, and equipment in use to identify any hazards that may develop while we are working on an excavation. This may even include evaluating certain excavations for the presence of a potentially hazardous atmosphere or evaluating whether unexpected events like a heavy rainstorm or a broken water pipe have created a hazardous condition that must be addressed before we resume work.

The Competent Person has the authority from his or her employer to remove workers from areas whenever any hazardous situation arises until the hazard has been corrected or removed.

However, the Competent Person cannot always be everywhere on the jobsite, nor can they see everything that is going on. When you do see a potential problem, be sure to take steps to ensure the safety of yourself and others and then inform the Competent Person or your supervisor of what you've seen.

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