

## **Safety in excavations or trenches**

Excavating is recognized as one of the most hazardous construction operations. OSHA's construction excavation standards at 29 CFR 1926 Subpart P were revised a few years ago to make them easier to understand, permit the use of performance criteria where possible, and provide construction employers with options when classifying soil and selecting employee protection methods.

OSHA regulations require the following to be present at all excavations or trenches:

- Excavations or trenches 5 feet deep or greater require a protective system.
- The walls of the excavation or trench must be one of the following:
  - Sloped for stability.
  - Cut to create stepped or benched grades.
  - Supported by a system made with posts, beams, shores or planking and hydraulic jacks.
  - Supported by a trench box to protect workers in an excavation or trench.
- Excavated materials must be at least 2 feet away from the excavation or trench.
- An exit ladder must be within 25 feet of workers.

Never allow your employees to enter an unprotected excavation or trench!