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# Don't Let a Trench Be Your Grave

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**An experienced trench worker**

**Left his young son fatherless**

**Worker in narrow ditch replacing  
sewer line**

**Wall of dirt collapsed and buried him**

**Trench was not properly sloped**

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**This tragedy is familiar but preventable**

**Trenches five feet deep or more need support**

**Don't enter unprotected trench**

**No matter what any supervisor says**

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## Can you survive trench collapse?

- Many workers don't
- One square yard of dirt weights 3,000 lbs
- Try breathing with this weight on your chest

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## **Cave-in most common hazard caused by:**

- **Weak soil**
- **Vibration from heavy equipment**
- **Water leaking into trench**
- **Soil placed too close to edge**

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## Another hazard is toxic gases

- If you suspect “bad air,” stay out
- Low oxygen levels can render you unconscious
- Electrocution another hazard in trenches
- And explosions of natural gas



**Daily inspections**

**By competent person**

**Inspect trenches at start of each shift**

**And after rainfall**

**Don't forget ladder as safe means  
of entry/exit**

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## Establish protective systems, including

- **Sloping – cut back trench walls at angle**
- **Shoring – support walls with cross-braces**
- **Shielding – use trench box to prevent collapse**

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