Excavations Stats and Facts

FACTS

1. Trenched areas sometimes have depleted oxygen levels, and the atmosphere can also be contaminated by toxic gases and chemicals.
2. Hitting utility lines when digging can cause electrocution and material gas leaks.
3. Before digging, have an expert examine soil stability.
4. Develop and have employees practice a trench collapse emergency plan.
5. Hiring a professional engineer or a qualified professional to design a system that prevents cave-ins is critical to prevent injury and jobsite fatalities.

STATS

- Seventy-two percent of the fatalities occurred in trenches less than nine feet deep. Only nine percent occurred deeper than 15 feet.
- The most commonly killed employees were construction laborers (53%), with plumbers and pipe fitters following next at 9%. Most (58%) were killed while installing pipe.
- Only 6 % were union members. Nationwide, about 20 % of construction work is union, the expected rate of union fatalities would be near 20 %. The lower rate suggests that union jobs are safer, that supervisors and workers on union sites are better trained and that the union offers the kind of protection that workers need to speak up about safety issues on the worksite.
- Just over half the employers had a written safety and health program, but, of these, only 40 % covered trenching. 65 % provided no trench safety training. Most employers (71%) had never been inspected by OSHA, but 21 % had been previously cited by OSHA for trench safety violations.

- About three in every four fatalities occurred at residential worksites. Most companies were small; 42 % had fewer than ten employees. Though, typically, five or less workers were present on the site when the incident occurred, most of the projects (52%) involved contracts worth $100,000 or more.