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General Trenching & Excavation Safety

It has been well established what the risks are when using an excavator - it is probably time to go over the ways you can avoid these risks once again.

Here are some safety standards you and the people at your worksite can do to avoid excavation hazards:

1. Follow CAL - OSHA Guidelines

Make sure that you and your employees are fully aware of the CAL-OSHA guidelines pertaining to excavation.

2. Stop Overhead Work

Prohibit equipment and other employees from working above anyone working in the trench or excavation.

3. Keep Water Out

Use pumps to remove water from the excavation and do not allow employees to be in any excavation or trench that has water accumulating in it. Water affects the integrity of the excavation.

4. Set Boundaries

Never leave the excavation open when work is not being performed in the area. Use barricades, fencing, and signage to protect both employees and anyone who is passing by from falling into the excavation or driving into it.

5. Be Mindful About Utilities

Always use the "One Call" service to ensure there are no underground utilities in proposed excavation areas or have utilities properly marked prior to digging. Look at as-built drawings when they are available for the area the excavation is occurring.

6. Gas Testing

When there is a chance for a hazardous atmosphere in an excavation that employees are entering, ensure gas testing is done, including any low points where gases can collect.

There are more ways to avoid excavation hazards. The easiest way is to use common sense. If something does not feel right about the process, it is because something probably is not right. Also, be sure that the ONLY people who operate an excavator are trained to do so.

Excavation Safety Starts with You:

Excavators have undoubtedly made life easier for construction workers and excavating contractors. What used to take weeks, even months to do, now only takes a day, maybe two. However, these machines can be extremely dangerous.

Understanding the risks and how you can avoid these risks can help keep your worksite safe.

By emphasizing the importance of excavation safety early, employees will recognize the importance of excavation preparation.

Even if they have zero plans of operating the excavator, the people around the excavator can also be at risk.

It is important that everyone involved in the process is aware of the risks involved.