



Commonwealth of Kentucky Labor Cabinet

Andy Beshear, Governor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Make Trenching Safety a Priority

Sloping, shoring and shielding trenches key to keeping workers safe

Frankfort, Ky. (Nov. 4, 2020) — Seeking to raise awareness of trenching fatalities and accidents, the Kentucky Labor Cabinet is asking employers and excavation workers to make safety a priority on job sites.

Precautions must be taken to ensure trench workers have adequate protections in place to avoid cave-ins and other hazards, especially while excavation crews work in reduced daytime visibility and inclement weather during fall and winter months.

“Trenching is among the most hazardous of all construction jobs,” Labor Cabinet Secretary Larry Roberts said. “Trench cave-ins pose serious risks, and result in serious injuries and fatalities.”

The Bureau of Labor Statistics recorded 97 trenching fatalities in the U.S. between 2013 and 2017. The weight of one cubic yard of soil is equivalent to that of an automobile, and could spell disaster for someone trapped inside a trench, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

To reduce trenching accidents, the Kentucky Occupational Safety and Health Program requires each employee in an excavation to be protected from cave-ins by a protective system such as sloping or benching the trench walls, shoring them with supports, or shielding them with trench boxes. Workers must also be able to safely enter and exit trenches, not work when there is standing water or atmospheric hazards until adequate precautions are taken, and construction materials that could pose a hazard must be kept away from trench edges. A competent person must make daily inspections of excavations, the

adjacent areas, and protective systems prior to the start of work and as needed throughout the shift.

The Labor Cabinet developed two [online modules](#) on excavation safety. The Trenching and Excavation eTool can be found on the [Occupational Safety and Health Administration's website](#).

For more information on workplace safety, please visit [KYSAFE website](#) and [OSHA.gov](#).

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