

# Trench Safety

Working in an unprotected trench is dangerous

- Protect workers from cave-ins when trenches are at least 5' deep and from shallower trenches where a cave-in hazard exists.
  - Do this by supporting the walls with shoring, shielding workers with trench boxes, or sloping the walls back wide enough, per the *OSHA Excavation Standard*.
  - Protect employees from water accumulation by pumping out ground or utility water.
- Provide ladders to workers when working in trenches of at least 4'.  
Call **Dig Safe at 1-(888) 344-7233** to identify underground utilities.
- Ensure that workers wear high-visibility clothing when working around vehicle traffic.
- Use *Part 6 of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* to determine appropriate work zone signage and traffic channeling devices.
- Spoils must be placed 2 feet from the trench edge.
- **Do not** allow employees to work under suspended or raised loads or materials. A competent person must inspect each trench worksite, including the soil protective system, before the start of work, and again if there is a hazard-increasing change in conditions, like a rainstorm.

## Resources from the Department of Labor Standards

Download a copy of our **[Trench Template Program and Inspection Worksheet](https://mass.gov/doc/trench-template-program-and-worksheet)** at **[mass.gov/doc/trench-template-program-and-worksheet](https://mass.gov/doc/trench-template-program-and-worksheet)**

For more information, visit **[mass.gov/dls](https://mass.gov/dls)**



MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF  
**LABOR STANDARDS**