

# Excavation Safety Requirements for Public Cemeteries in Massachusetts



## Cemetery employees must be protected from cave-in:

- Provide cave-in protection when workers enter an excavated grave when:
  - Depth is greater than 5 feet; <sup>1926.652(a)(1)</sup>
  - Depth is less than 5 feet, but a cave-in hazard exists, <sup>1926.652(a)(1)(ii)</sup>
  - Regardless of how long or short a time period the employee is in the hole. <sup>1926.650(a)</sup>
- Cave-in protection can be: trench box, shoring, or sloping. <sup>1926.652(c), 1926.652(b)</sup>
- Keep soil piles at least two feet away from the excavation edge. <sup>1926.651(j)(2)</sup>
- A Competent Person must inspect the excavation for all potential hazards, including the effectiveness of cave-in protection before allowing an employee to enter. <sup>1926.651(k)(1)</sup>
- Provide a ladder for entry and exit into excavations 4 feet or more in depth. <sup>1926.651(c)(2)</sup>
- Slings used to lift vaults must be inspected and labeled with capacity rating. <sup>1926.251(a)</sup>
- Employees must not be permitted underneath loads handled by lifting or digging equipment. <sup>1926.651(e)</sup>
- Open graves that are left unattended must be barricaded to prevent an accidental fall into the opening. <sup>1926.501(b)(7), 520 CMR 14.00</sup>
- Employees must be trained on trench safety. <sup>1926.21(b)(2)</sup>

## Regulations:

- 1-Massachusetts 454 CMR 25.00 requires all public sector employers to comply with OSHA standards. The Department of Labor Standards has jurisdiction for enforcement of OSHA standards at municipal cemeteries.
- 2-OSHA 29 CFR 1926.652 requires all employers to provide cave-in protection in all trench excavations. In excavations less than 5 feet deep, an employer must demonstrate that no cave-in hazards exist in order to waive the requirement for a cave-in protective system.

**For additional resources or to contact DLS, visit:**  
**[mass.gov/info-details/safetyworks-resources](https://mass.gov/info-details/safetyworks-resources)**