

Ask the Safety Guru

Since SAFETY is always a hot topic that gets little press coverage – we are encouraging members to send their SAFETY questions to “Ask the Safety Guru” through webmaster@mwoa.net. We will review those submissions and publish the most interesting and relevant questions in upcoming issues.

“Dear Safety Guru: *My question is regarding trenches and excavations. Are there any special regulations that we need to follow or some rule of thumb in dealing with earth work?*”

Safety Guru responds:

There are a number of issues that you need to be aware of in dealing with excavations and trenches. The primary issue is how to work safely in and around such projects and the need to have a “competent” person review such projects to ensure worker safety. A competent person is one who has received training specific to the issues regarding excavations and trench work. This person can determine what types of protection (like shoring or a trench box) are required to enter the work space. Typically anything 4 foot deep (or greater) and/or you can enter it, requires safety consideration. Far too many people are at risk in excavations that are entered without proper shielding from cave-ins. Excavations are also subject to their surroundings – often a lot of heavy equipment or even traffic in the area can create hazardous environments. So it may be necessary to observe confined space entry procedures should the space not be well ventilated. Also, personal protection such as hard hats, safety footwear, eye and hearing protection may also be required. Remember – if a “competent person” hasn’t given an approval to enter the trench or excavation – **DO NOT ENTER!**

Safety Tip of the Month – Inspect your hard hat and safety glasses each and every time you use them. If they show any defects or cracks – replace them. Some hard hats have expiration dates – even those that do not have date imprints need to be replaced often. Sunlight and extreme temperatures can damage and weaken them. In doubt – get a new one!

Be safe and keep those questions coming.

For additional information you can go to www.osha.gov website and search “first report of injuries” to find out more.