



## Inside ASG

-  The Monthly Muster
-  The People Post
-  The Brag Board

## The Monthly Muster

### Excavation and Trenching

### Trench-related fatalities spurs additional oversight

In 2022's first six months, 22 workers fell victim to the deadly hazards present in trenching and excavation work – surpassing 15 in all of 2021 – and prompting the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration to launch enhanced enforcement initiatives to protect workers from known industry hazards.



To stress the dangers of disregarding federal workplace safety requirements for trenching and excavation work, OSHA enforcement staff will consider every available tool at the agency's disposal. These actions will place additional emphasis on how agency officials evaluate penalties for trenching and excavation related incidents, including criminal referrals for federal or state prosecution to hold employers and others accountable when their actions or inactions kill workers or put their lives at risk. In keeping with its [National Emphasis Program for excavations](#), OSHA compliance officers will perform more than 1,000 trench inspections nationwide where they may stop by, and inspect, any excavation site during their daily duties.

"The Occupational Safety and Health Administration is calling on all employers engaged in trenching and excavation activities to act immediately to ensure that required protections are fully in place every single time their employees step down into or work near a trench," said Assistant Secretary for Occupational Safety and Health Doug Parker. "In a matter of seconds, workers can be crushed and buried under thousands of pounds of soil and rocks in an unsafe trench. The alarming increase in the number of workers needlessly dying and suffering serious injuries in trenching incidents must be stopped."

"Every one of these tragedies could have been prevented had employers complied with OSHA standards," Parker continued. "There simply is no excuse for ignoring safety requirements to prevent trench collapses and cave-ins, and leaving families, friends and co-workers to grieve when the solutions are so well-understood."

A recent incident in central Texas highlights the dangers of trenching and an impetus for OSHA's action. On June 28, 2022, two workers, aged 20 and 39, suffered fatal injuries in Jarrell, Texas, when the unprotected trench more than 20 feet deep collapsed upon them as they worked. Trench shields, which could have saved their lives, sat unused beside the excavation.

Trenching and excavation operations require protective systems and inspections before workers can enter. When employers fail to install trench protection systems or properly inspect the trench, workers are exposed to serious hazards, including risk of being buried under thousands of pounds of soil. By some estimates, a cubic yard of soil can weigh as much as 3,000 pounds, equal to that of a compact car.

**States that operate their own Occupational Safety and Health plan** have similar emphasis programs in place, and OSHA also encourages those states to consider additional measures, including criminal referrals for federal or state prosecution for trenching-related incidents.

**Trenching standards require protective systems on trenches deeper than 5 feet** and soil and other materials kept at least 2 feet from the edge of a trench. Additionally, trenches must be inspected by a knowledgeable person, be free of standing water and atmospheric hazards and have a safe means of entering and exiting prior to allowing a worker to enter.

"OSHA stands ready to assist any employer who needs help to comply with our trenching and excavation requirements," Parker added. "We will conduct outreach programs, including safety summits, in all of our 10 regions to help ensure any employer who wants assistance gets it. The stakes are too important." [continued pg. 2](#)





# The Monthly Muster

## Excavation and Trenching

continued

OSHA's On-Site Consultation Program, a free and confidential health and safety consulting program for small- and medium-sized businesses, will assist employers in developing strategic approaches for addressing trench-related illnesses and injuries in workplaces. The agency also urges workers to contact their local **OSHA or state plan office**, or call 800-321-OSHA, if their employer requires working in or beside trenches that are not sloped, shored, or shielded and are five or more feet in depth. **OSHA's trenching and excavation webpage** provides additional information on trenching hazards and solutions, including a **safety video**.



**OSHA ALERT**

Sources: [OSHA News Release](#), [Trenching & Excavation](#)

# The People Post

## Retirement Savings

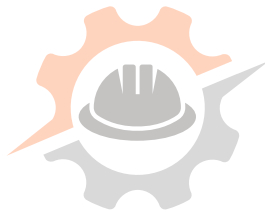


### Illinois Secure Choice Act

Illinois state law requires Illinois employers to participate in Illinois Secure Choice if they do not sponsor a qualified retirement plan, have 5 or more employees and have been in business for more than two years. Employers who have fewer than five employees, have been in business for less than two years, or who already offer an employer-sponsored retirement plan are exempt from facilitating the program. If your business is not exempt, it must complete company registration with the Illinois Secure Choice program to meet your state mandate. By law, eligible employers must register and facilitate program activities by specific deadlines. Setting up your account is quick and easy. After completing these steps for the first time, you'll maintain your account by adding and removing employees and submitting payroll deductions each pay period.

#### Just a few simple steps

- Determine Eligibility
- Register Your Company
- Add Your Employees
- Submit Contributions



#### Employer Registration Deadlines

<p><b>25+</b> employees</p> <p><b>DEADLINE PASSED</b> Register today to avoid financial penalties.</p>	<p><b>16-24</b> employees</p> <p><b>DEADLINE PASSED</b> Register today to avoid financial penalties.</p>	<p><b>5-15</b> employees</p> <p><b>NOVEMBER 1, 2023</b> Registration is open</p>
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Employers who do not comply with the Illinois Secure Choice Savings Program Act will be subject to fines and penalties as described in 820 ILCS 80/85. Enforcement for select non-compliant employers with 25 or more employees will begin in 2023.

Sources: [Registration](#), [Illinois State Treasurer](#), [The Last Stage](#)

# The Brag Board

## ASG Team Updates



**Doug Sams, CHST**, Director, Client Services Division, provided the following training to employees at Florida Communications, LLC in Mississippi:

- Mobile Elevated Work Platform
- Fall Protection
- Portable Ladders
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Lockout/Tagout



This past month ASG had the opportunity to:

- Educate workers about fall protection and elevated work in Mississippi
- Provide Site Safety Representation for 3 Natural Gas pipelines with our Utility Partners in Illinois
- Renew OSHA Authorized Construction Outreach Trainer credentials to our team members
- Provide American Red Cross Adult First-Aid/CPR/AED Training and Certification to our client teams
- Conduct 100+ jobsite inspections on utility contractors throughout Illinois for our Utility Partner, Ameren, Illinois

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"Your Partner in Workplace Safety"

