

## Timeline of a Trenching Fatality

**8:15 a.m.** Police officers are called to a construction site in Des Moines, Iowa, to respond to a trench collapse. The victim, a 30-year-old male, and a few other workers were digging a trench while excavating a sewer pipe, when the walls of the trench collapsed. The trench is more than 12 feet deep and slick with thick mud. The victim is trapped and buried under the collapsed mud. Rescue efforts begin.

**9:35 a.m.** The fire department's tactical team switch from rescue to recovery. The rescue crew works for hours constructing a makeshift box from plywood and hydraulic jacks, but the walls of the trench continue to re-collapse during the recovery effort.

**1 p.m.** Authorities call for an industrial trench box, a tool used to protect workers from cave-ins. According to the police chief, the workers didn't seem to be using any kind of protection during their morning work. **A trench box was at the site but not in use.**

**2:30 p.m.** The victim's body is recovered. Notification of family follows.

### Final Word

This death, and countless other trenching and excavation deaths, did not have to happen. Employers and employees must take responsibility for safety in excavations.

**ONE**  
CUBIC FOOT  
**OF SOIL**  
can weigh over  
**45 kg**  
(100 pounds)

- Trenches must be properly sloped, shored, or equipped with the right type of shielding, to protect workers against cave-ins.
- Everyone needs to understand that when it comes to an excavation, it's a matter of **WHEN** a collapse will happen, not **IF** one will happen.
- Workers must exercise their right to refuse work that puts them in danger.
- Employers must train workers on trenching and excavation safety, provide required protective measures, ensure those measures are being used, and safety procedures are enforced.

### BY THE NUMBERS

## Occupational Noise Exposure

Hearing loss is more common than you might think. Interestingly, due to recreational, work, and environmental noise, hearing loss is occurring at younger and younger ages. Hearing loss is also one of the fastest growing and most prevalent, chronic conditions facing workers today.

- 22 million workers are exposed to hazardous noise each year.
- Noise above 80-90 decibels, on average, over an 8-hour workday is considered hazardous and can cause damage to your hearing.
- Hearing loss is the third most common complaint among adults after hypertension and arthritis.
- In Canada, hearing loss is second only to arthritis as the most common complaint among adults.
- Only 10% of hearing losses can be helped by surgery or other medical treatment.



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