



STATE OF MICHIGAN

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GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & ECONOMIC GROWTH
DAVID C. HOLLISTER
DIRECTOR

MICHIGAN OCCUPATIONAL
SAFETY & HEALTH ADMINISTRATION
(MIOSHA)

August 20, 2004

Company contact name
Company Name
Address
City, Michigan Zip

Dear Sir or Madam:

RE: *Excavation and Trenching Awareness Training*

The purpose of this letter is to launch an initiative to help reduce or eliminate excavation and trenching accidents by providing an opportunity for employee training. This letter provides important information on the hazards associated with excavation work and MIOSHA requirements for employee training. Employee training can help reduce or eliminate injuries and fatalities and help ensure compliance with MIOSHA standards.

According to MIOSHA statistics, 19 Michigan workers have died in trench collapse accidents since 1994. Cave-ins however, are not the only threat to these workers. They also face hazards associated with underground utilities, working with heavy machinery, manual handling of materials, working in proximity to traffic, and electrical hazards such as overhead power-lines. Because of the recognized higher hazards in excavation and trenching, the work operations are a focus in the MIOSHA five-year Strategic Plan. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has also published data on excavation and trenching injuries and fatalities that can be viewed at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/trenching/>.

Compliance with standard requirements and training are a central theme in a front page report titled, *Occupational Fatalities During Trenching and Excavation Work – United States, 1992-2001* in the April 23, 2004 issue of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control publication, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. This report may be viewed at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/wk/mm5315.pdf>. The report states that employers can reduce the risk for future deaths by adhering to OSHA standards and by using education and training resources on safe work practices.

A comprehensive and well maintained company Accident Prevention Program (APP) that includes supervisor and employee training helps to prevent injuries and death in this industry. MIOSHA annual tracking of construction accident investigations indicate that a majority of construction employers are cited for an inadequate APP and/or lack of adequate training.

MIOSHA is initiating a proactive campaign to help ensure that employees involved in excavation and trenching receive the training required by Construction Part 1, General Rules and Construction Part 9, Excavation, Trenching and Shoring. Employees must be trained on:

- The safe operation of equipment
- The recognition and avoidance of hazards in the workplace
- The hazardous substances to which they may be exposed
- The hazards of confined spaces

Part 9, requires a trained and experienced “Qualified Person” to evaluate excavation hazards. MIOSHA Construction Safety and Health standards can be found at: <http://www.michigan.gov/miosha/>.

Employees at excavation and trenching sites must be able to recognize the hazardous condition before an accident occurs. **It is the employer’s responsibility to ensure that their employees possess, at a minimum, adequate training on the above issues and all other training required by standards specific to the work operation or exposure.** Proper training can reduce accidents, related costs and lost production, as well as avoid MIOSHA citations and penalties.

To address these serious issues, MIOSHA is initiating this campaign to help ensure that employers are aware of the need to adequately train their employees and provide opportunities to attend training. This letter is being sent to Michigan construction employers identified as having work activities that may include excavation and trenching. You may wish to contact your trade association, a safety training/educational consultant, union training center, or the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth – MIOSHA Consultation Education and Training (CET) Division by completing and returning the enclosed self-addressed card. CET will contact you with the time and place of scheduled *Training* courses. As workshops are scheduled they will be posted on the MIOSHA website on the CET calendar.

Our goal is to ensure that effective training is provided to employees to help reduce exposures to the hazards of excavation and trenching work. **Should you need additional information, please call the MIOSHA CET information line at 517.322.1809.** Your personal support and interest in the safety and health of your employees and the general public is appreciated.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Mee
Construction Safety & Health Manager



Tom Swindlehurst
Senior Construction Safety Consultant

Enclosure