Protect Yourself
Trench Safety

• Do not enter an unprotected trench!
• Trench collapses cause dozens of fatalities and hundreds of injuries each year.
• Trenches 5 feet deep or greater require a protective system.
• Trenches 20 feet deep or greater require that the protective system be designed by a registered professional engineer.

Protective Systems for Trenches
• Sloping protects workers by cutting back the trench wall at an angle inclined away from the excavation.
• Shoring protects workers by installing aluminum hydraulic or other types of supports to prevent soil movement.
• Shielding protects workers by using trench boxes or other types of supports to prevent soil cave-ins.

Competent Person
OSHA standards require that trenches be inspected daily and as conditions change by a competent person prior to worker entry to ensure elimination of excavation hazards.

Safety Tips
• Inspect trenches at the start of each shift, following a rainstorm or after any other hazardous event.
• Test for low oxygen, hazardous fumes and toxic gases before entering a trench.
• Keep heavy equipment and excavation spoils at least two feet away from the trench edge.
• Provide stairways, ladders, ramps or other safe means of access in all trenches 4 feet or deeper.

Think Safety!
For more complete information:

U.S. Department of Labor
www.osha.gov (800) 321-OSHA