# A screen shot of a computer Description automatically generatedExcavation safety

Cave-ins from excavations are one of the leading causes of worker fatalities in the construction industry. Those working in the water districts are regularly required to work in and around excavations. Employers must ensure that excavations are safe for workers to enter to prevent serious injury and death.

*Basic rules to consider when working in a trench:*

* Any excavation that is 4’ deep or more must have a method of egress. This can be provided as a ramp, ladder, or other safe method. It must be located not more than 25 feet from the worker.
* Any trench that is more than 5’ deep must have some form of protection from cave-in. The only exclusion would be an excavation entirely made of rock.
* Heavy equipment should be kept away from the edges of the trench to prevent the wall from falling in due to the weight of the equipment or from the equipment itself falling in.
* Spoil piles should be kept at least 2’ from the edge of the trench. This prevents the material from weighing down and resulting in a wall collapse.
* Underground utilities should be located prior to the start of each job.
* If working in a trench that is 4’ or greater the atmosphere should be tested before entry and then continuously.
* Trench stability can change from day to day or even one shift to the next. The excavation should be re-inspected prior to the start of each shift.
* They should be re-inspected following the presence of any rain or water in the trench.

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