

How Safe Is Your Workspace?

Kansas Rural Water Association provides many training sessions for workplace safety. I would like to review the importance of workplace safety and the two aspects that KRWA sessions focus on.

Trench Safety

Improper trench safety and confined spaces can be deadly and costly. As an example, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recently proposed a \$243,406 fine against an Austin, Texas, contractor after a trench collapse there killed one worker and injured another last October. The incident happened only hours after two workers escaped from a partial trench collapse and the employer-ordered employees back into that same trench “to finish the job.” They went back into the “unprotected 13-foot-deep trench” to continue installing residential wastewater lines, but they “were not as fortunate later on,” according to officials with OSHA. Shortly after they reentered the trench, it collapsed for a second time, killing the worker.

During 2020, the most recent year that data is available, at least 19 workers died in the U.S. in collapses of construction trenches. Untold others are injured. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, during 2011 to 2016, trench collapses caused 130 deaths in the industry. All would have been preventable if employers had followed required safety measures. When a cave-in happens, the soil can move as fast as 45 to 65 MPH. Imagine waiting until a truck is 15 feet from you traveling that speed and you try to step out of the way. One cubic yard of soil can weigh as much as 3900 pounds. That’s as much as a pickup truck setting on you.

The definition of a trench is any excavation that is longer and deeper than it is wide and less than 15 feet wide. A

confined space trench is large enough and so configured that an employee can bodily enter and perform assigned work, has limited means for entry or exit, and is not designed for continuous employee occupancy. A trench is a confined space and can require permitting according to OSHA rule 1910.146. Remember the 4-5-6 guideline. If the trench is four (4) feet or deeper, you must have a ladder within 25



Larry Trester, Humboldt, prepares to enter a confined space during a KRWA training session in Chanute, while Jay Heiman, Spring Hill, and Derrick Barton, Humboldt, observe under the supervision of Cheryl Treptow with Mid-West Fire Training Associates.

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Kevin Jones with Mid-West Fire Training Associates discusses the proper way to install shoring during a KRWA training session in Chanute.

feet of any persons in the trench. Trenches deeper than five (5) feet must have shoring or benching installed. Trenches more than six (6) feet deep must have fall protection for all employees entering the trench. These are all OSHA rules that must be followed. Shoring or benching is required before any personnel enter the trench. The shoring and trench walls should be inspected often to make sure that there has been not shifting or movement. The shoring must be placed according to the manufacturer’s specifications. Spoil piles can also become hazardous and should always be placed two (2) feet or further away from the edge of the trench.

Confined Space

A permit required “Confined Space” is one that meets one or more of these conditions:

- Contains or has the potential to contain a hazardous atmosphere
- Contains a material that has the potential for engulfing an entrant
- Has an internal configuration that might cause an entrant to be trapped or asphyxiated by inwardly converging walls or by floor that slopes downward and tapers to a smaller cross section
- Contains any other recognized serious safety or health hazards

The deadliest year for confined space accidents in Kansas was 1998, when 12 people died.

According to data collected by the U.S. Department of Labor, fatal injuries in confined spaces average 92 per year. That’s almost two per week. And more than 60 percent of those are would-be rescuers. Never enter a space to rescue unresponsive personnel unless you are qualified and are wearing the proper rescue equipment. Otherwise, you might become another person in need of rescue. The deadliest year for confined space accidents in Kansas was 1998, when 12 people died.

Confined spaces can be deadly because of the potential for engulfment, oxygen deficiency, oxygen enrichment, flammable gases or vapors, combustible dusts, toxic substances and other physical hazards. One of the most important things to remember is to test the atmosphere early and often. Wear a monitor while in the space. Test for oxygen, combustibles, and toxic chemicals. Once again there is the 4-5-6 rule. More than four feet you need to test the atmosphere. More than five feet a retrieval system must be added with a two to one mechanical advantage to the surface. Anything more than six feet must have fall protection or deceleration device, such as a body harness. The body harness must be a Class 3 full-body harness.

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Shoring equipment is being displayed during KRWA training conducted by Kevin Jones with Mid-West Fire Training Associates in Great bend.

Ideally, there should be at least a three-person team whenever working in confined spaces. And at least one of those people should remain outside the confined space. Each person should have specific tasks that they are responsible

for. Know what they are and follow them. The life you save could be yours.

This article only scratches the surface of what to look for to prevent accidents in trenches or other confined space situations. Worker training is essential to know all the hazards. If you need confined space or trench safety classes check out KRWA's website. Cheryl Treptow and Kevin Jones with Mid-West Fire Training Associates do an excellent job presenting the training sessions. KRWA has sessions scheduled across the state. If you have any questions about any training sessions, feel free to call me at (785) 258-0642 or email me at bret@krwa.net. Keep checking the website KRWA is adding more training all the time and as always if there is some new training that interests your city or RWD, let us know and we will do our best to accommodate the request.

Looking forward to seeing you at a future training date.

Bret Beye joined the KRWA staff in March 2017. He previously worked for 30 years at the city of Herington where he was Water Distribution and Sewer Collection Foreman. A Class III water operator and certified as a backflow device technician, Bret also served on the USD 487 Board of Education from 2003 to April 2017 where he was board president and vice-president.





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TRAINING > Schedule & Register

Today July 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6

Administrative / Management
Board / Council
Cross Connect / Backflow Prevention
Drinking Water Regulations
Electrical

NOTE -- This schedule shows the training sessions presently planned by KRWA. Additional sessions will be posted as they are developed. Please note that for VIRTUAL (Online) TRAINING, click on the link in the brochure. DO NOT "ADD TO CART". ONLINE TRAINING IS HANDLED THROUGH GO TO WEBINAR PORTAL. AS OF NOVEMBER 10, KRWA IS REQUIRING MASKS BE WORN BY ALL THOSE ATTENDING IN-PERSON TRAINING. BRING YOUR OWN, OR KRWA WILL ALSO PROVIDE AT EACH SESSION.

Search for training by entering a word in topic or city (location) name.

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July 21, 2022	Lead and Copper Rule Revisions - Hydrants & Valves		Charge		
July 26, 2022	The ABC's of VFDs				
July 27, 2022	The ABC's of VFDs (by ABB)	Manhattan Fire			

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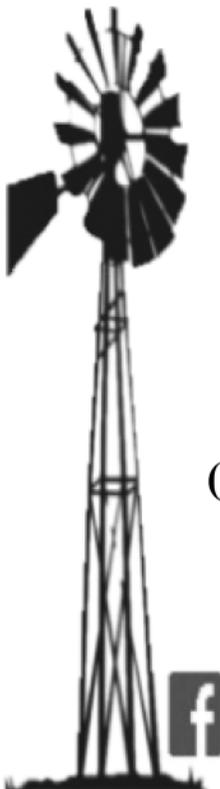
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