



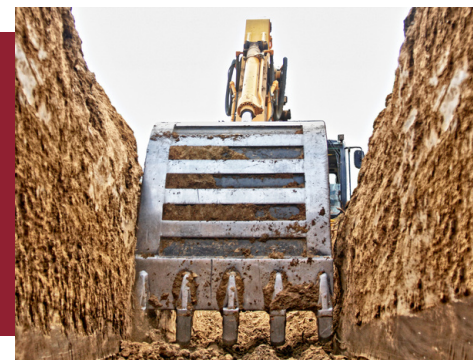
# MATHERS SAFETY SNAPSHOT

## COMPETENT PERSON RESPONSIBILITIES AT EXCAVATIONS

OSHA standards require that trenching and excavation sites are inspected daily and as conditions change by a competent person before worker entry in order to ensure elimination of excavation hazards. OSHA defines a competent person as an individual who is capable of identifying existing and predictable hazards or working conditions that are hazardous, unsanitary or dangerous to workers; can identify soil types and design appropriate protective systems; and is authorized to take corrective measures to eliminate hazards and dangerous conditions.

### THAT'S A FACT

Excavation work is one of the most unpredictable construction areas to work in. The principal reasons for this are local variations in the water table, ground conditions and the presence of underground services. Excavation cave-ins can cause serious and often fatal injuries to employees.



The competent person for excavation must be aware of and focused on many key aspects of the trenching and excavation site, including:

- Clear and open communication with all personnel responsible for the excavation operations;
- Determination of the appropriate protective systems based on the conditions at the excavation site, including trench depth and width, soil conditions, etc.;
- Monitoring of all employees entering the excavation to ensure proper training in hazards and recognition, work practices, protective measures and emergency response;
- Ongoing inspections of the excavation and adjacent areas;
- Atmosphere testing for potential oxygen deficiency or build-up of hazardous gases;
- Classifying soil and rock deposits, by visual analysis and testing, to determine appropriate protection; re-classifying, if necessary, based on changing conditions;
- Authorizing immediate removal of employees from hazardous areas where evidence of possible cave-in, failure of protective systems, hazardous atmospheres or other hazardous conditions exists, until proper safety precautions are taken.