



Effective Oct. 1, 2018, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) moved forward with an updated excavation and trenching national emphasis program. The safety enhancements represent a renewed effort on the part of the agency to prevent excavation and trenching collapses in the wake of a recent increase in trenching fatalities.

The most recent U.S. Department of Labor figures available indicate that there were 104 trenching-related construction fatalities between 2011 and 2016, and that nearly half of those fatalities occurred between 2015 and 2016. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of construction trenching cave-in deaths jumped to 33 in 2016, from just 18 in 2015 and 10 in 2014.

Once the emphasis program's three-month education period concludes and the agency increases its enforcement efforts, contractors in violation of excavation and trenching safety standards will be subject to potentially steep penalties. Already in April 2018, Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration cited a Michigan contractor for several alleged trench-related violations and proposed fines totaling more than \$454,000. Similarly, a water utility in Honolulu was fined nearly \$200,000 earlier this year for failing to protect its workers from possible trench collapse.

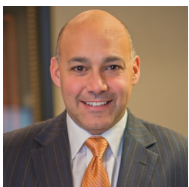
[Click here](#) to see the full news release from OSHA. All contractors that engage in trenching and excavation activities should use this time to evaluate their compliance obligations. Contractors that perform this type of work and that have any doubt as to their compliance obligations should take advantage of OSHA's education and outreach programs by contacting the local offices.

Contact one of the attorneys below if you have any questions regarding this program or the steps that your company should take to ensure compliance with OSHA's trenching and excavating regulations.



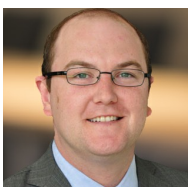
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