

## OSHA Training Toolbox Talk: Basic Excavation Safety – Safety Tips When Using Hydraulic Shores

*[Reference 1926 Subpart P]*

Aluminum hydraulic shores are a great time-saver when used on certain types of excavation sites. This can be attributed in part to their light weight, and their relatively quick and easy installation as compared to building a timber shoring system or installing many other forms of protective system. But there are a few things to keep in mind when we are utilizing aluminum hydraulic shores as our protective system, such as:

- Never enter a shored trench until you are certain the Competent Person has cleared it for entry.
- Never walk out from a shored area of a trench into an unprotected area of the trench for any reason, even if it is just for a few seconds. A cave-in can happen in a split second with little or no warning of what is about to occur.
- Always use a portable ladder or other approved means to enter and exit the shored area of the trench. Do not climb up and down the spreaders on the hydraulic shores. When using a portable ladder to enter or exit the trench, make certain it is located inside of the protected area of the trench. In addition, secure the ladder against unintentional displacement, and make sure the side rails of the ladder extend at least three feet above the top of the ground or other landing surface so you have something to grab when getting on and off of the ladder.
- Be on the lookout for any missing parts or damage that may occur to the hydraulic shores. Broken welds, damaged cylinders, and bent rails are but a few of the things that need to be reported as quickly as possible so they can be evaluated by the Competent Person and corrected when necessary. Also watch for loose or broken plywood sheeting, when used.
- Also report other conditions that may affect the safe function of hydraulic shores. For example, the hydraulic fluid that expands the shoring cylinders so the shoring rails fit firmly against the sides of the trench could bleed off if there is a leak in a hydraulic cylinder, hose, or pump. That, in turn, could cause the shores to slide down the sides of the trench, and possibly even fall. So report any fluid leaks and other signs of loose shores to the Competent Person or your supervisor ASAP.
- Federal OSHA standards and many hydraulic shoring manufacturers do allow excavation of soil up to two feet below the bottom of the shores, but only in certain conditions. So do not excavate soil to a level below the bottom of the shores without first confirming with the Competent Person it is safe to do so; and if so, confirm how deep you can dig.

These are just a few tips for working safely in and around hydraulic shores. Can anyone think of any other tips that are pertinent to aluminum hydraulic shore safety? Please take a moment and your print your name and provide your signature on our OSHA Safety Training Certification form so you will get credit for attending today's toolbox talk.