

## FIRE FIGHTERS GUIDANCE NOTE # 6-28

### ISSUE:    RESCUE FROM A COLLAPSED TRENCH

Fire departments are being called upon to assist with incidents where one or more persons are trapped in a collapsed trench or excavation.

An “excavation” is defined as the hole that is left in the ground as a result of removing material. A “trench” is defined as an excavation where the excavation depth exceeds the excavation width.

Trench rescue requires highly specialized training, equipment and procedures in order for the rescue to be completed in a safe manner. Any fire department that intends to enter trenches to provide rescue services should ensure that Operational or Technician Level trench rescue training (as appropriate to the level of emergency response determined by the fire department) are provided and that appropriate resources are in place in order to safely perform this work.

Firefighters who have not been trained beyond “Awareness Level” should never enter a collapsed trench.

At a minimum, fire departments should ensure that each firefighter is provided with “Awareness Level” trench rescue training that includes the following:

- Recognizing the need for a trench and excavation rescue;
- Identifying the resources necessary to conduct safe and effective trench and excavation emergency operations;
- Initiating the emergency response system for trenches and excavations;
- Initiating site control and scene management;
- Recognizing general hazards associated with trench and excavation emergency incidents and the procedures necessary to mitigate these hazards within the general rescue area;
- Recognizing typical trench and excavation collapse patterns, the reasons trenches and excavations collapse, and the potential for secondary collapse;
- Recognizing the unique hazards associated with the weight of soil, soil conditions, stability and its associated entrapping characteristics;
- Initiating a rapid, non-entry extrication of non-injured or minimally injured victim(s).

Fire departments that do not provide trench rescue services should have plans in place for the provision of these services in the event that they encounter a collapsed trench where rescue is required.