



Standard Operating Guidelines  
Section 180.0

| SECTION:        |               | GUIDELINE:    |        |
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| 180.0           |               | Trench Rescue |        |
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## Trench Rescue

### Definitions

**Recovery mode:** Recovery mode is defined as situations where the victim is obviously expired or after a period of time during the rescue operation where time, conditions, or other factors have reduced the chance for the victim's survival to minimal.

**Rescue mode:** Rescue mode is defined as situations where the victim is believed or known to be alive. If this is unknown, personnel should operate in the rescue mode until time, conditions, or other elements make the chance for survival minimal.

**Trench:** An excavation in which the depth is greater than the width and is less than 15 feet wide. Trench rescue operations present a significant danger to fire department personnel. The safe and effective management of these operations requires special considerations and resources.

**The Evansville Fire District functions at the AWARENESS level. Therefore it is the policy of the Evansville Fire District that personnel SHALL NOT enter into an unsafe trench or excavation.**

Examples of activities and functions appropriate at this level include:

- Recognition of a trench collapse incident
- Identifying resource needs
- Initiating response of operations and/or technician level personnel
- Establishing scene control

### Arrival on Scene

- A. The first-in unit should position the apparatus a minimum of 50' from the location of the trench collapse. Additional arriving units should initially stage a minimum of 150' from the location.
- B. The first arriving officer should establish command and complete an initial size-up including:
  1. Secure any witnesses
  2. Location, number, condition of victims and how long buried
  3. Depth of trench
  4. Utility and other scene hazards
  5. Determination of rescue or recovery mode
  6. Determination of additional resources needed

### Scene safety

- A. Establish hot, warm, and cold zones (utilize barrier tape and natural boundaries)

**Hot – 0-100' from trench      Warm – 100-500' from trench      Cold – 500' and further from trench**

- B. Secure and/or shut down machinery and traffic within 300' of trench
- C. Implement lock out/tag out
- D. Place ground pads within 4 feet of trench

**Incident Actions**

- A. If victim is partially buried, lower lifeline and instruct victim to tie around themselves
- B. If indicated, lower ladder into trench - for victim self-rescue only
- C. If victim is buried, mark last known location using dry chemical extinguisher
- D. Establish atmospheric monitoring
- E. Establish ventilation of trench (if necessary)
- F. Relocate any soil piles to be a minimum of 2 feet from trench
- G. Establish staging area for additional arriving apparatus and personnel



