

Standard Interpretations

10/15/1999 - Excavations may be shored with wooden shoring.

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• **Standard Number:** [1926.652\(a\)\(1\)](#); [1926.652\(c\)](#)

October 15, 1999

The Honorable Ron Kind
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Kind:

Thank you for your letter dated September 10 on behalf of Mr. William Crogan, regarding the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standard on excavations, particularly as they relate to the digging of graves. You explained that your constituent assists a church with its cemetery work. The letter indicated that many small operations use wooden shoring, and that the cost of metal shoring equipment, which Mr. Crogan estimates would cost \$1,500, would be an insurmountable burden for a small business like his. We appreciate hearing about these concerns.

Excavating is one of the most hazardous construction operations. Our excavation standard (volume 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations, sections 1926.650-1926.652), requires employers to stabilize the walls of excavations prone to cave-ins. The rule requires employers to choose among several protective measures to protect employees working in such excavations more than 5 feet (1.5 m) deep. Employers can use shoring, sloping, or an equivalent method.

In developing the rule, OSHA evaluated the standard's effect on small businesses. We noted that there may be instances where full compliance with the standard would be more difficult for smaller firms. That was one of the reasons we designed the standard to provide several options for employers to choose from in providing cave-in protection.

Your letter indicates that Mr. Crogan is under the impression that he is required to use metal, rather than wooden shoring. Our rule does not prohibit wooden shoring. In fact, Appendix C to the standard contains information about the use of timber shoring (copy enclosed).

We appreciate the opportunity to clarify the provisions of our excavation standard. We would be happy to answer any further questions you or Mr. Crogan may have about the use of timber shoring to comply with the standard.

Sincerely,

Charles N. Jeffress
Assistant Secretary