



# Toolbox Talks

## Ground Conditions



Unsafe ground conditions can introduce new hazards on outdoor job sites which can slow down projects and can also be dangerous for workers. Examples:

- cracked walkways
- embankments
- environmental debris
- exposed tree roots
- flat, wet surfaces
- ground voids, sinkholes
- holes in the ground
- invisible level changes
- loose soil or gravel
- rocky terrain
- rubble or debris
- sandy areas
- snow, ice, or slurry
- soft mud
- uneven or sloping terrain

Ground conditions can change overnight. For any outdoor job site, ground conditions should be included in the daily hazard assessment.

- Identify uneven or unstable areas, and then fix, cover, barricade, re-route, or make equipment adjustments accordingly to ensure worker safety.
- Use ground protection mats over muddy, slippery, or uneven areas.
- Cover or guard all holes at the job site that are trip hazards for workers or tip-over hazards for equipment.
- Clear tall grass or brush on the job site that could be covering hidden dangers like holes, sharp objects, snakes, or other wildlife.
- Remove stones and rubble that are creating uneven ground conditions or create an alternate route for personnel and equipment.

Adequate ground conditions are required for the safe operation of heavy equipment, cranes, and any mobile elevated work platforms.

- Conduct a site inspection to assess ground conditions before moving equipment into an area.
- Underground utilities can be impacted by the weight of equipment so ensure the ground conditions are always strong and stable enough to hold the weight of the load.
- If work cannot be moved or delayed, poor ground conditions may require additional foundations such as pads or mats to spread the weight and stabilize the load.

When muddy ground conditions are a job site nuisance:

- Use heavy equipment, like a bulldozer, to clear or level the muddy areas. The goal is to create a solid and stable ground surface that is safer for work activities.
- Add temporary ground protection pads or mats on foot paths to prevent slips and falls, especially at the entrances and exits to the work site.
- Do not drive into excessively muddy areas or up and down slick slopes. Getting equipment stuck in the mud creates even more hazards for workers when they have to help pull the vehicle out.
- While walking, if you get your foot stuck in the mud, slowly move your foot back and forth to gently work it out. Do not attempt to forcefully yank your foot out of the mud which can cause a fall and result in injury.
- Keep the steps on heavy equipment clean and remove mud off your boots before climbing up into the cab. Always use three points of contact when climbing up and down.

