



# COMPETENT PERSON

Toolbox Talks for the members of Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities

July 2016

**According to OSHA, the “Competent Person” is defined as “one who is capable of identifying existing and predictable hazards in the surroundings or working conditions which are unsanitary, hazardous, or dangerous to employees, and who has authorization to take prompt corrective measures to eliminate them”[1926.32(f)] The employer designates the Competent Person but must ensure that this person is properly trained to recognize hazards and knows how to mitigate them.**

The term “Competent Person” is used in many OSHA standards and other OSHA documents. By way of training and/or experience, a competent person is knowledgeable of applicable standards, is capable of identifying workplace hazards relating to the specific operation, and has the authority to correct them. Some standards, such as the scaffolding and excavation standards, add additional specific requirements which must be met by the competent person.

The term “Competent Person” is also frequently misunderstood. For instance, attending a Competent Person class or carrying a card identifying you as a Competent Person neither determines your competency nor gives you the authority to take corrective actions. Only the designation of the employer can give you that authority.

The term “designated” means selected or assigned by the employer or the employer’s representative (usually management) as being qualified to perform those duties. During an OSHA inspection the inspector will ask for the Competent Person (or maybe the person in charge) to interview and assess whether or not the jobsite’s work is being conducted under a truly proficient Competent Person.



The CP for excavations must be familiar with all parts of OSHA’s 1926 Subpart P.

- OSHA’s Construction Standards very frequently mention the Competent Person and their duties regarding that standard. Being a Competent Person is about knowledge and action—promptly correcting hazards!
- The construction standards address short-term or temporary work where the working environment changes rapidly.