

7 Crushed by trench collapse—Inspection # 1390141 Spencer Utility Dept

A **25 year old male** employee was fatally injured when he was **crushed in a 10' deep trench** that collapsed. The victim and another employee responded to a request by the county highway department to repair a water line that had been damaged during the road repairs. The County workers stated after they hit the water line, they notified the city's utility department and asked that a crew come to repair the leak. After the utility department got on-site, they left in order to take their dinner break after which they returned to the trench to see how the repair was progressing.

Upon arriving on site, the water supply was shut off to the damaged section of piping. After shutting off the water, the two employees returned to the trench and tried to dam up the culvert on the South side of the street to prevent any more water from entering the trench. They also noticed they did not have the right size pipe to repair the line. The victim returned to the office to get a longer piece of pipe.

While he was gone, the other employee began using the county highway department's track-hoe to locate the leak. While doing this, he made the trench wider than what the highway department had previously dug. When the victim returned to the jobsite, he immediately went into the trench to begin making the repairs.

It was determined that the victim was going to be the operator's (other employee) "eyes" while more dirt was dug out of the trench. The victim had been in the trench for approximately 30 minutes working on the leak when the trench collapsed. Interviews of employees on site indicated that the victim was standing with a shovel under the track hoe while it dug on the east side of the trench. It was stated that when the operator scooped the bucket, the east side of the trench wall collapsed.

**Citation(s) as Originally Issued**

A complete inspection was conducted at the accident scene. Some of the items cited may not directly relate to the fatality.

**Violation 1 Item 1**

**Type of Violation: Serious**

**\$0**

**29 CFR 1926.21(a):** The employer did not establish and/or supervise programs for the education and/or training of employers and/or employees in the recognition, avoidance and prevention of unsafe conditions in employments covered by the act.

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On April 2, 2019, employees working in and around a 10-foot deep trench on Phifer Mine Road were unaware of the hazards associated with trenching and excavations and the procedures to control or eliminate those hazards.

**Violation 1 Item 2**                      **Type of Violation: Serious**                      **\$0**

**29 CFR 1926.100(a):** Employees working in areas where there is a possible danger of head injury from impact, or from falling or flying objects, or from electrical shock or burns; were not protected by protective helmets:

On 4/2/19, an employee who was exposed to possible falling objects while working in a 10-foot deep trench was not wearing a protective helmet.

**Violation 1 Item 3**                      **Type of Violation: Serious**                      **\$0**

**29 CFR 1926.651(c)(2):** A stairway, ladder, ramp or other safe means of egress was not located in trench excavations that were 4 feet (1.22m) or more in depth so as to require no more than 25 feet (7.62m) of lateral travel for employees.

On 4/2/19, the employer did not use a safe means for access and egress at an excavation site located at Phifer Mine Road for an employee who was working in a 10-foot deep trench without a ladder.

**Violation 1 Item 4**                      **Type of Violation: Serious**                      **\$0**

**29 CFR 1926.651(h)(1):** The employer had not provided adequate precautions to protect employees who were working in excavations and were exposed to the hazard of an accumulation of water.

On 4/2/19, an employee was fatally injured in a trench collapse on Phifer Mine Road while working in a 10-foot deep trench that had an accumulation water that caused the ground to become unstable which eventually resulted in a cave-in.

**Violation 1 Item 5**                      **Type of Violation: Serious**                      **\$0**

**29 CFR 1926.651(k)(1):** Daily inspections of excavations, the adjacent areas and protective systems were not made by a competent person for evidence of a situation that could have resulted in possible cave-ins, indications of failure of protective systems, hazardous atmospheres and/ or other hazardous conditions.

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On 4/2/19, an employee was working in a 10-foot deep trench that had not been inspected by a competent person.

**Violation 1 Item 6**

**Type of Violation: Serious**

**\$0**

**29 CFR 1926.652(a)(1):** Each employee in an excavation was not protected from cave-ins by an adequate protective system designed in accordance with paragraph (b) or (c) of this section:

On 4/2/19, an employee was exposed to engulfment and struck-by hazards while working in a 10-foot deep trench on Phifer Mine Road that did not have adequate cave-in protection.

PICTURES TAKEN AFTER COLLAPSE DURING THE RESCUE PHASE.



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