

31 Trench collapse – Inspection #1273639

A **42 year old male** employee was fatally injured when the trench wall caved-in on him. The victim was in a 5 foot deep trench installing pipe to tie into the existing main sewer line. The company had been contracted to install a bathroom sewer line for the new construction gymnasium. The Foreman had dug the trench and set the pipe into the trench using a track hoe. The victim then entered the trench to connect the new sewer pipe into the existing line. The victim was in the trench for approximately 5 minutes when the trench wall caved-in on him. The investigation revealed that the spoil pile was located at the edge of the trench on both sides which created extra weight on the walls and likely contributed to the wall collapsing. The 5 foot deep trench did not have any type of cave-in protection.

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.

Citation 1 Item 1

29 CFR 1926.651(c)(2)	<p>A stairway, ladder, ramp or other safe means of egress was not located in trench excavations that were 4 feet or more in depth so as to require no more than 25 feet of lateral travel for employees.</p> <p>In that there was no ladder or other safe means of egress out of the trench. The trench the employee was working in was 40 feet long, 5 feet deep and 32 inches wide and employees were climbing in and out of the trench using the trench wall.</p>
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Citation 1 Item 2

29 CFR 1926.651(j)(2)	<p>Protection was not provided by placing and keeping excavated or other materials or equipment at least 2 feet from the edge of excavations, or by the use of retaining devices that were sufficient to prevent materials or equipment from falling or rolling into excavations, or by a combination of both if necessary.</p> <p>In that the spoil pile was set at the edge of the trench.</p>
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Citation 1 Item 3

29 CFR 1926.651(k)(1)	<p>An inspection of the excavations, the adjacent areas, and protective systems was not conducted by the competent person prior to the start of work and as needed throughout the shift.</p> <p>In that a 40 foot long, 5 foot deep and 32 inch wide trench was not inspected by a competent person who was knowledgeable of the trenching/excavating requirements.</p>
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Citation 1 Item 4

29 CFR 1926.652(a)(1)	<p>Each employee in an excavation was not protected from cave-ins by an adequate protective system designed in accordance with 29 CFR 1926.652 (b) or (c).</p> <p>In that there was no cave-in protection for an employee working in a 40 foot long, 5 foot deep and 32 inch wide trench.</p>
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Citation 1 Item 5

29 CFR 1926.1053(b)(4)	<p>Ladder(s) were used for purposes other than the purpose for which they were designed.</p> <p>In that an employee was improperly using a Werner 10 foot step-ladder that was in a trench and in the closed position, leaned against the dirt wall. The ladder was intended by the manufacturer to be used fully opened with the spreaders locked.</p>
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Photo 1 of 1 – Photo shows the collapsed trench.