

**Subject: Excavations & Trenches**

**Tool Box Talk No.: 015**

Most excavation accidents occur in trenches which have no support at all because they are in what is considered to be so-called "safe ground", or because work has gone beyond the support provided.

- Excavations must be subject to risk assessments.
- Risk assessments will identify the method of support or sloping / battering.
- Always check that you have ladder access, and it is positioned in the supported area.
- Never throw tools or materials down to someone in an excavation, use a rope to lower them down.
- Always wear a safety helmet - even small stones falling from the top can injure you.
- Drivers of mobile plant must take special care when operating close to the edge of excavations.
- Excavations must have barriers around the top as identified in the risk assessment.
- Materials and equipment must not be stacked close to the edge of excavations.

It is commonly thought that deaths associated with excavation collapses are due to the workers being suffocated because they are completely buried, but this is not entirely true.

Many of the deaths and a majority of the injuries involve workers being partially buried.

The injuries sustained are usually crushing injuries caused by the sheer weight of the collapsing material.

The accidents associated with excavations happen for many reasons, some of which are:-

- Shoring was not installed where required.
- Shoring failed because it was not frequently inspected or maintained.
- Employees worked beyond the shoring protection.
- Excavation walls and shoring were not inspected frequently for signs of movement or deterioration.
- Workers re-entered excavations without inspecting the walls or shoring after rain storms.

There are other contributory reasons for excavation accidents beside soil and shoring failures, such as:-

- Dirt, sheet piles and construction materials being stored too close to the edge of the excavations.
- Equipment operating too close to the edge of the excavation.
- Improper access, damaged or missing ladder or no ramps.
- Workers trying to jump over excavations.

Almost all serious trench accidents occur not in bad ground, but in so called "good" ground.

Look at the myths and then at the real facts relating to trench excavations:-

**MYTH** Trenches in clay are safe.

**FACT** 79% of fatal trench accidents have occurred in clay.

**MYTH** You do not need trench sheets if an experienced man is in charge

**FACT** 75% of fatal trench accidents have occurred when an experienced man has been in charge of the trench excavation.

**MYTH** You do not need trench sheets when you dig, lay and backfill all in one day

**FACT** 74% of fatal trench accidents have occurred in trenches which have been open for only for a few hours or even minutes!!

**REMEMBER A CUBIC METRE OF EARTH WEIGHS OVER 1.5 TONNE.**

**IF YOU GET IT WRONG, THE CONSEQUENCES COULD BE GRAVE!!!**

## TOOL BOX TALK RECORD SHEET

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SUBJECT OF TOOLBOX TALK: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF PERSON DELIVERING TOOLBOX TALK: \_\_\_\_\_

TIME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE ANY QUESTIONS ASKED BY STAFF DURING TOOL BOX TALK:

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