

## Trenches and Excavations

By: James (Jim) Fusaro, Compliance Safety and Health Officer

### Who's in Charge Here?



On average, national statistics show that two workers are killed each month in trench collapses and many more are injured. With the proper know-how and the use of the proper equipment, this statistic should be zero.

The picture above was taken by me several months ago in a town which shall remain nameless, as I'm not out to embarrass anyone. But it depicts what I found when responding to an accident which had occurred near the excavation. I'm sure that many of you reading this article got a good chuckle out of it if you perform this type of work, as the problems should be quite obvious.

The most common problem that we find on this type of job is the lack of a "Competent Person" being on

site, which is defined by the OSHA regulations, 49 CFR §1926.650(b) 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"***.

I have been on sites where when I asked, "who is the competent person?", I got no response, and I've also been on sites where everyone on the crew raised their hand. Someone should be the designated competent person, so everyone knows who is in charge of that site, and every worker should know who that person is.

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### \*\*\*Reminder\*\*\*

#### OSHA 300A The Summary of Work Related Injury and Illnesses

Employers who are required to keep the Injury and Illness log, must post Form 300A, the Summary of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses, in a workplace every year from **February 1 to April 30**.

## The CONN-OSHA Family Welcomes Brian Testut



Brian recently joined CONN-OSHA as a public sector Occupational Hygienist in the consultation program. His previous employment of seven years with the Department of Public Health, Occupational Health Unit and Lead Poisoning Prevention and Control Programs followed ten years of public health experience at a Connecticut municipal health department. Brian received a MS in Industrial Hygiene, a BS in Environmental Public Health and currently holds an Occupational Health and Safety Technologist certification.

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The U. S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health (OSHA) also welcomes two new appointments within the department.

Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health Dr. David Michaels has appointed Dorothy Dougherty as the new deputy assistant secretary for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Dougherty brings more than 32 years of federal experience to this position, having served for 22 years in OSHA and several years in the Mine Safety and Health Administration as an industrial hygienist and coal mine inspector.

Mr. Robert Hooper has been appointed as Acting Regional Administrator of OSHA's Region 1 Office, Boston, Massachusetts.

We wish them both well.

## Trenches & Excavations, *Cont.*

**Other important things to consider for excavations:**

- Know where the underground utilities are located (Call Before You Dig)
- Keep heavy equipment and spoil piles at least two feet away from trench edges
- The competent person inspects the excavation before employees are allowed to enter the trench and before each shift, after any rainstorm, or if the conditions have changed.
- A trench box or approved shoring is in place if the trench is over 5 feet deep (it must be designed by a professional engineer if the trench is 20 feet deep or more)
- A ladder, or other means of safe access/egress, is located within 25 feet of all workers if the trench is 4 feet or deeper
- Do not work under raised loads
- Test air quality for low oxygen, hazardous vapors and gases
- Adjacent traffic

I don't know about you, but I would hate to be a supervisor, crew chief, co-worker or a union steward to make "that call". What call you ask? "The call" that tells the spouse or family member of the employee who was on my work site that there was a cave-in. The call to inform them that they are listed as their loved one's next of kin and that I have bad news for them.

So, as we prepare for the warmer weather (finally!) and the time when scheduled road, water and sewer maintenance is picking up, please take the time to ensure that you and your employees and co-workers are safe when entering trenches and excavations. And finally, **NEVER ENTER AND UNPROTECTED TRENCH!**



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## Listen Up! – A toolbox talk could save your life, By Eric Giguere

Toolbox talks, tailgate meetings, safety time outs, crew briefings. The name varies depending on the scope of work being done, but it doesn't matter what they're called. These mandatory, five to 10-minute conversations about safety at a jobsite have real value. That is, if you take them seriously.

When I was working in the field, we were required to have toolbox talks a few times a week, but we never did. We might have had them every other week. Regardless, they all pretty much went the same way. At 6:45 a.m., while we drank our coffee before our 7 a.m. shift, my boss would come up to us and say something like, "Wear your safety glasses, don't get hurt, sign this and now get to work."

That was it. That was our safety meeting for the day. No time for feedback, or a conversation, just get to work. Sadly, we were okay with that.

Since then, I've learned that a toolbox talk should be more; it should encourage conversation on a safety topic or changing condition at the jobsite that may affect the day's work, and everyone's safety. It's a tool to use to give every worker a chance to speak up and share any concerns that he or she may have.

So why is this important to you? Why should you consider it more than just a small social gathering where you can talk about last night's football game?

The answer is really quite simple. Ninety percent of all workplace accidents are caused by unsafe acts or unsafe

working conditions. If these acts and conditions can be addressed in a short, simple meeting, you'll be more aware, and have a better chance of going home to your family every night. A 10-minute talk that *you're getting paid for* can be the difference between going home from work or going to the hospital.

Don't be like my crew was back in the day and blow off these meetings. Don't tune them out. *Take them seriously.* Toolbox talks are the perfect chance for you to bring up safety ideas or concerns that you may have. Participate in your safety meeting. If you don't, you won't be heard. What you've learned through personal experience won't be shared. Who knows, the idea you share during that brief meeting could be the one that saves your coworker's life – or even your own.

Don't cheat yourself or your family. Take these meetings to heart and pay attention. Toolbox talks exist for *you*, the worker, and for *your family*, who appreciate it when you step through the front door each night. This Article was reprinted with permission from "My Safety" magazine, Fall 2013 Issue. My Safety magazine is published quarterly. [MYSafetyMagazine.com](http://MYSafetyMagazine.com).



## Choosing the Right Classification of Safety Vest

Choosing a hi-visibility safety vest for your employees can be difficult and confusing. There are different colors, classes, reflective, non-reflective, long sleeve, short sleeve, upper body, lower body, full body. Where do you start?

Per OSHA requirements, vests must meet the requirements of American National Standards Institute (ANSI), specifically ANSI 107. ANSI/ISEA requires high-visibility apparel manufacturers to include specific information about their products on the inside label of each garment, including the performance classification number and a pictogram or drawing of the garment. Read the label to make sure the garment is ANSI/ISEA compliant and that it meets your needs. The retro-reflective material should be visible at a minimum distance of 1,000 feet.



If you work in a street or highway and you're exposed to traffic or construction equipment, you must wear a high-visibility garment. Emergency responders and law enforcement officers must also wear high-visibility apparel when they are doing traffic control, cleanup, investigations, or similar tasks.

Some examples of occupations by class are:

ANSI Class 1: Shopping Cart Retrievers, Warehouse Workers, Delivery Truck Drivers

ANSI Class 2 or 3: Roadway Construction Workers, Utility Workers, Surveyors, Emergency Responders, Flaggers

## Fatality & Casualty Reporting

**State & Town:** CONN-OSHA (860) 263-6946 (local) or 1-866-241-4060 (toll-free)  
**Private Employers:** Report to Federal OSHA at 1-800-321-OSHA(6742)

## Hazard Corner....

In the past two years, 34 workers lost their lives to trenching cave-ins. In the U.S..

On Friday, August 19, 2005, at approximately 12:00 p.m., a 24-year-old worker died when he was buried under a wall of the trench he was working in. The excavation wall and part of the sidewalk next to the concrete garage floor collapsed onto him while he was attempting to attach the new PVC pipe he and his coworkers had installed that morning to the main sewer in the alley. One of the decedent's co-workers was also caught in the collapse. Two other workers on-site, neighbors who heard their calls for help, and firefighters who arrived on the scene were able to extricate the decedent's co-worker (the company owner) from the excavation. He was transported to a hospital and recovered. The decedent's body was recovered from the excavation approximately 8 hours after the wall collapses.

### • Recommendations:

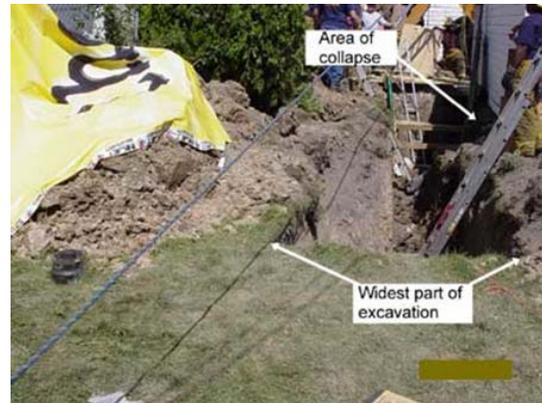
- Employers and self-employed contractors should slope or shore or use trench boxes in all excavations greater than 5 feet deep.
- Employers and self-employed contractors should ensure that excavations are inspected by a competent person prior to start of work and as needed throughout a shift to look for

evidence of any situation that could result in possible cave-in.

- Employers and self-employed contractors should design, develop, and implement a comprehensive safety program that includes training in hazard recognition and avoiding unsafe conditions.

- Emergency medical services and fire-rescue personnel should be knowledgeable about proper rescue techniques involving excavation sites and ensure that adequate shoring equipment is on hand at all times. The full article is available at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/face/stateface/mi/05MI084.html>



## Connecticut-OSHA ~ Training Update...

**Hazard Communication** *March 5, 2014 from 10:00 a.m. to noon* At this workshop the Hazard Communication Standard (HCS) will be reviewed along with the major changes of 29 CFR 1910.1200: hazard classification, pictograms and safety data sheets.

**Confined Space Safety** *March 12, 2014 from 10:00 a.m. to noon* This workshop discusses the basic requirements and procedures involved with permit-required confined spaces as detailed in 29 CFR 1910.146.

**Construction Site Safety** *April 4, 2014 from 9:00 a.m. to noon* Construction managers, first line supervisors, and construction employees will be provided with an overview of four areas of concern on the construction site. Program contents include: fall protection, scaffolding and ladder safety, electrical hazards, and excavation & trenching safety.

**Work Zone Safety** *April 9, 2014, from 10:00 a.m. to noon* Basic guidelines for work zone traffic control and the requirements of Part VI of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) with particular emphasis on short term work sites on roads and streets in rural and small urban areas will be presented.

**Trenching & Excavation** *May 21, 2014 from 10:00 a.m. to noon* This workshop will provide an overview of 29 CFR 1926.650-652 excavations, including the role of the competent person. The session is designed to assist participants in identifying hazards associated with excavations and related activities.

**Safe Driving – Get There Safely EVERY Time** *June 18, 2014 from 10:00 a.m. to noon* Work-related vehicle crashes are the leading cause of occupational fatalities according to the U.S. Dept. of Labor. The goal of this session is to increase awareness of the need for, and the benefits of safe driving.

**Breakfast Roundtable** This discussion group meets the third Tuesday of every month from 8:15 am to 9:45 am. Pre-registration is required. Visit our web page for more information: <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/osha/Breakfast/index.htm> To be placed on the e-mail distribution list, contact John Able at [able.john@dol.gov](mailto:able.john@dol.gov)

Classes are free and are held at 200 Folly Brook Boulevard, Wethersfield, CT in Conference Room A/B (unless otherwise noted). To register, contact Catherine Zinsser at [zinsser.catherine@dol.gov](mailto:zinsser.catherine@dol.gov). Pre-registration is required. A Photo I.D. is also required to allow entry into a public building. For more training information, visit the CONN-OSHA web site [www.ConnOsha.com](http://www.ConnOsha.com)