

Case 24. 18-year-old male carpenter killed when 10-foot excavation wall collapsed burying him.

An 18-year old male carpenter was part of a work crew installing a 4-inch sewer line to a new residence. He was working in a trench that was approximately 52 feet long and 10 feet deep. The east wall collapsed approximately midway in the trench, completely covering him. The excavation did not have a trench box, proper sloping or shoring. He was found with his head against the west wall of the excavation. After digging him out of the excavation, emergency personnel transported him to a local hospital where he was declared dead. He died of compression asphyxia and blunt force injuries to his head.

MIOSHA issued the following Serious citations to the employer:

1. The employer had an inadequate safety program in place that does not meet the minimum requirements set forth in MIOSHA Construction Safety Standard Part One General Rules. (General Rules, Part 1, Rule 114(1))
2. The employer did not have any persons at the work place with a valid first aid training certificate, exposing employees to lack of medical procedures to be followed if needed. (General Rules, Part 1, Rule R408.40132(3))
3. The employees were not wearing head protection while installing a sewer line and were exposed to being struck by clumps of heavy damp excavated clay at the edge of the excavation and were also exposed to being struck by the back hoe while working in the swing radius. (Personal Protective Equipment, Part 6, Rule R408.40622(1))
4. A 10-foot deep excavation with vertical sides was not cut consistent with a proper evaluation by a qualified person during the installation of a sewer line. (Excavation, Trenching, and Shoring, Part 9, Rule R408.40932(5))
5. Excavated materials were at the edge of the 10-foot deep excavation, exposing employees installing a sewer line to a cave-in hazard by the added weight of the soil pile. (Excavation, Trenching, and Shoring, Part 9, Rule R408.40933(2))
6. The employer failed to provide a ladder or ramp to provide a means of access to enter or exit the excavation; employees were climbing the bucket and boom to enter and exit the excavation. (Excavation, Trenching, and Shoring, Part 9, Rule R408.40933(5))
7. The employer did not properly cut the sides of two excavations to the proper angle of repose, and did not provide shoring or a trench box. (Excavation, Trenching, and Shoring, Part 9, Rule R408.40941(1))