

CSI Country Wide Case Study Safety Strategy Discussion

Construction Safety Investigator



Instructions

The objective of this tool is to provide field supervisors with information to proactively engage workers and discuss safety related concerns that they may encounter. Safety discussions should not be limited to the subject above and should pertain to the activities that workers will be involved in that may have the potential for safety related exposures.

Case Day:

December 2003

Accident Type:

Excavation Accident - Botched Rescue

Relevant laws, rules and codes may include:

29CFR 1926.20(a)(1), 1926.21(b)(2), 1926.651(k), 1926.652

Case:

A construction worker was decapitated when panicked colleagues used a backhoe to try to dig him and another man out of a collapsed trench.

Accident Detail:

The workers were employed by a construction company which had been working in the area and excavated a trench in an attempt to link a row of homes to sewer connections.

While working, the trench suddenly collapsed, burying the two workers. Rather than waiting for emergency rescue personnel to arrive, the two workers' colleagues attempted to rescue them on their own by using a backhoe. In doing so, they decapitated one of the workers.

After the rescue workers arrived, they used ropes to lower themselves into the trench, taking about two hours to shore up the walls of the 35 foot long, 10 foot wide ditch and removed the victim's body. The co-worker who was buried up to the waist was saved when firefighters and an unidentified civilian dug him out with their bare hands and shovels.

Reconstructive Safety Evaluation:

- What are some of the possible causes of the accident being discussed?
- What actions could have been taken that might have prevented this accident from occurring?

Accident Scene Conclusion:

The investigation revealed that the trench collapsed because it was not properly supported as required. When the trench collapsed, the construction workers jumped into action without waiting for firefighters or police to arrive.

Preventive Safety Measures Include:

- Workers are trained in the hazards of excavations, the work they are to perform, the personal protective equipment and safe work procedures necessary to perform their assigned tasks.
- Ensure workers do not enter excavations until first inspected by a Competent Person¹ and he/she had determined there is no evidence of a situation that could result in a cave-in, failure of protective systems, hazardous atmosphere, or other hazardous conditions.
- All employees in excavations 5 feet or more in depth are protected from cave-in by an adequate protective system such as sloping, benching or shield system.
- If the Competent Person finds evidence of an unsafe situation, all workers are immediately removed from the excavation until necessary precautions have been taken to ensure their safety.
- Workers should never attempt to enter an unsafe excavation or attempt to rescue trapped or injured coworkers from an excavation without assistance and direction from trained emergency responders.

Attendance Roster

Reference: This case was reported in the Daily News, Backhoe Beheads Worker, December 16th, 2003.

¹ As defined by OSHA requirements



Chubb is the marketing name used to refer to subsidiaries of Chubb Limited, providing insurance and related services. For a list of these subsidiaries, please visit our website, www.chubb.com. Insurance is provided by ACE American Insurance Company and its U.S. based Chubb underwriting company affiliates. All products may not be available in all states. This communication contains product summaries only. Coverage is subject to the language of the policies as actually issued. Surplus lines insurance is sold only through licensed surplus lines producers. Loss control evaluations, reports, recommendations and services are made solely to assist the insurer in underwriting and loss control and are not to be construed as an added benefit for the insured, property owner or any other party (this may not apply if loss control services are purchased separately and specifically pursuant to a service agreement). Evaluation for any hazard or condition does not imply that it is covered under any policy. Chubb is the world’s largest publicly traded property and casualty insurance group. With operations in 54 countries, Chubb provides commercial and personal property and casualty insurance, personal accident and supplemental health insurance, reinsurance and life insurance to a diverse group of clients. Chubb Limited, the parent company of Chubb, is listed on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE: CB) and is a component of the S&P 500 index.