

FATAL ALERT

On August 20, 2012, an employee working for a construction company was fatally injured while working in a trench shield. At the time of the accident, the superintendent/competent person of the project was operating the excavator performing finish grade work within the trench shield at the same time an employee was inside the trench shield, roughly 6.5 feet from the excavator bucket. Work being performed was prepping the trench to make the final connection to a 6 inch drain line. The employee in the trench shield was assigned to guide/spot for the excavator operator to ensure proper grading during the digging operation. During the process, the employee in the trench sustained fatal injuries to the side of the head, causing severe fracturing of the skull.

Significant Factors

- Management failed to ensure that an employee was in a safe zone in the trench box while the excavator was being used in the same trench box.
- The operator of the excavator was not tested for Drugs and Alcohol even though he was involved in two incidents on the same day.
- The excavator operator and the employee in the trench shield did not maintain continuous eye contact.

Recommendations

- Brief all employees on the facts and circumstances of this fatal mishap.
- Ensure management/employees are trained on applicable OSHA construction rules.
- Train/retrain all employees on hazard recognition methods to avoid unsafe working conditions.