

## **FATAL ALERT**

**September 14, 2009**

A supervisor and coworker were working at an excavation site that involved removing an old metal culvert along a set of railroad tracks to allow for future track expansion. After removing dirt from above the culvert with a CAT Grader a chain was attached to both ends of the culvert and the Cat Grader then pulled on the chain in an attempt to remove the culvert from the excavation. While attempting to remove the culvert, it separated into two pieces. The supervisor and coworker then entered the excavation from the south end to wrap chains around the end of one of the separated sections of culvert to pull it out. With a plan that once the two sections of culvert were removed from the excavation, the area would be immediately back-filled. The supervisor walked along the north, 7 foot, straight walled side of the culvert while the coworker jumped from the north side to the south side to position himself to attach the chain to the culvert section. Immediately after jumping to the south side of the culvert, the coworker heard a noise and turned and could not see the supervisor. A large section of the straight wall had fallen with large chunks of soil striking the supervisor and burying him between the culverts. The co-worker immediately jumped back over the culvert and saw a hand sticking out from the soil on the north side of the culvert. The coworker immediately yelled for help and other workers on site came and dug the supervisor out while emergency services responded. The supervisor died from severe crushing injuries and mechanical asphyxia. No form of cave-in protection associated with excavations was being used.

### **Significant Factors:**

- The supervisor did not inspect and ensure adequate cave-in protection was in place prior to entering and working in the trench.
- The supervisor ignored suggestions made by a coworker, that the trench wall be sloped to afford cave-in protection.
- The supervisor decided against sloping due to having to remove a stop sign and putting others at risk of not having a posted stop sign at a railroad crossing.

### **Recommendations:**

- Brief all employees on the facts and circumstances of this fatal mishap.
- Brief/retrain/certify all employees on cave-in protection hazards, especially on requirements needed on straight walled excavations/trenches.
- Ensure site management personnel enforce the requirements to use proper cave-in protection.