Plumber Buried In Trench



INCIDENT

Mr. MCCruter was known for his plumbing skills. He was attempting to connect the plumbing for a new house to a main city sewer line. He was buried when the unprotected trench around him collapsed leaving him in dirt and unable to breathe.

Rescuers tried in vain for hours to save his life, but there was too much dirt and too little time. He died.

A preventable death.

NEED TO KNOW

Ladonte MCCruter age 30 was a day laborer hired by a subcontractor at a construction site in Birmingham Alabama on August 31st / 2014. He was working in a 12-foot unprotected trench when it collapsed on him.

BUSINESS / REGULATIONS

The impact of a single fatality in the workplace has three-fold progression. Mr. MCCruter's subcontractor who hired him as a day laborer was charged with "willful and serious" safety violations following an OSHA investigation. Bates construction, the prime contractor who hired the subcontractor was also charged with a serious violation.

OSHA safety regulations required specific protections for any trench or excavation site deeper than five feet: either sloping of trench walls, shoring up the trench with aluminum hydraulics or other support, or shielding workers with protective trench box.

Regulators can make all the pronouncements about lack of safety and resources dedicated to a safe work environment by employers. But the real tragedy is the personal and family devastation impact of a workplace fatality that could have been prevented. Mr. MCCruter was a young man when he died at work. His family and friends who knew him will never see and enjoy this "Kind man with a quick smile"

STATISTICS

Excavation is one of the most hazardous operations in the construction business claiming an average of 2 death per month. Between 2011 and 2015 according to Bureau of Labor Statistic (B.L.S.), 94 American workers were killed in trench collapses. In 2016, 23 US workers died in the trench collapses. In 2017, for the first 5 months, 15 workers died in trench collapses.

Temporary workers need to be scrutinized as well.

Temporary workers like MCCruter are often assigned to work in hazardous conditions with little or no training.

“Temporary Work, Lasting Harm,” a 2013 investigation by ProPublica analyzed millions of workers’ compensation claims in five states and found that “tempts face a significantly greater risk of getting injured on the job than permanent employees”

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics began tracking fatalities involving temporary or contract workers in 2011. In 2013, 749 temp workers died on the job representing sixteen percent of all fatalities, an increase from 715 temp worker deaths reported in 2012.

PREVENTION

There is well-worn refrain that an “ounce of prevention fetches a pound of cure.” The employer has the primary responsibility to provide a safe workplace. Trench workers should never enter a trench unless:

UNLESS:

- A proper inspection by been done by a competent person.
- Cave-in protection measures are in place.
- There is a safe way to enter and exit.
- Equipment and materials are away from the edge.
- It is free of standing water and atmospheric hazards.

Workers are knowledgeable about trench sizes

- Trenches 5 feet deep or greater require a protective system.
- Trenches 20 feet deep or greater require a protective system designed by a registered professional engineer.

Workers know protective system for trenches

- SLOPE or bench trench walls by cutting back the trench wall at an angle inclined away from excavation.
- SHORE trench walls by installing aluminum hydraulic or other types of supports to prevent soil movement.
- SHIELD trench walls by using trench boxes or other types of supports to prevent soil cave-ins.