

## **TOOLBOX TALK #26**

### **WORKER KILLED IN TRENCH COLLAPSE**

On the day of the incident, a 29-year-old construction worker was part of a crew installing a sewer pipe. The trench he was working in was 10 feet deep and about 3 feet wide. A collapse occurred in an unprotected area. When the trench collapsed, co-workers called 911 and attempted unsuccessfully to dig out the worker.

When emergency responders arrived, their first task before rescue and recovery efforts was to shore up the trench to prevent additional collapse and injuries. Emergency responders spent several hours recovering the worker's body.

#### **To prevent similar incidents:**

- Employees working in trenches 5 feet deep or deeper must select and install appropriate protective systems to protect from cave-ins.
- Have a designated competent person onsite who has the knowledge and authority to identify and promptly correct hazards. The competent person should visually and manually test the soil, as well as consult the shoring or shielding manufacturer's tabulated data.
- Employers must provide sufficient means of safe access and egress (i.e., ladders, ramps, stairs) for workers in any trench excavation 4 feet deep or deeper.
- Keep excavated soil and other materials and tools at least two feet from the edge of the trench.
- Train workers on trenching safe practices, as well as recognizing hazards.
- Develop a safety culture in which employees are encouraged to voice concerns about unsafe work conditions.