

Unsupported Trench Collapse

A groundwork's contractor was excavating a plot strip foundation at a Galliford Try housing development, in preparation for a mass concrete pour due to take place later that afternoon. The trench had been signed off as ready to pour. The trench (Pictured below, taken after the concrete pour) was approximately 1026mm wide, 900mm to 45° batter, 1474mm to top of soil at time of incident.

Prior to the concrete pour the groundworkers noticed a small section of trench had collapsed. The groundworkers decided to remove this material using a 360° excavator, positioned at the edge of a 45° batter. An operative acting as a banksman was in attendance to monitor the excavator as it worked.

The excavator operator, having removed some of the material from the bottom of the trench slewed round to empty the bucket and position the spoil on the outside of the excavation. At this point the IP without instruction or need, decided to enter the trench to assist with the removal of the fallen material by hand. As he did so a section of the trench collapsed. He was buried in the trench up to his torso by the falling material. The IP was dug out and rescued from the trench by his colleagues. The IP has sustained a fractured right collarbone during the trench collapse and is still unable to work due to the injury.

It is important to note that this incident could have resulted in a fatality and as such the IP has been fortunate on this occasion.

A full ground investigation for this site had been carried out, which showed that due to the makeup of the materials excavation work at this depth could cause the ground to become unstable.

Remember:

- **No one should enter any excavation unless it is supported and a safe means of access provided.**
- **No ground can be relied upon to stand unsupported in all circumstances.**
- **One cubic metre of soil can weigh as much as one tonne.**



Outcome

- All operatives involved in this type of work must be made fully aware of the hazards involved.
- All operatives must be explicitly instructed not to enter this type of unsupported excavation under any circumstances.
- HS&E standard E02 Excavations must be complied with in full when carrying out excavation work. This includes inspections.
- Adequate edge protection and safe working areas for anyone involved in this type of excavation work must be provided.
- All groundworking companies must be fully briefed on these requirements prior to commencement on any of our sites

Kerry Henderson
Senior HS&E Advisor
Galliford Try Plc

Communication Required: (double click on box to tick action to be taken)

Toolbox Talk Notice Board Supply Chain Review of Site Activities Information only

Actions Completed by: **Date**