

Arrest after man killed in sewage pit tragedy

The following report was received from another contractor undertaking similar work to MGJV. It reminds everyone involved in this type of work of how serious the consequences can be should a safe system of work not be followed.



The emergency services were called at 12.55pm to a building site in Bridgefield Road, Whitstable. On arrival they found that a 24-year-old man, from Canterbury, had fallen into the pit when its walls caved in on him. The 6ft deep trench is believed to have been created for sewage pipes for the homes that are being built on the land. Despite attempts to dig him free and resuscitate him, paramedics were unable to save him.

Following this another man has been arrested on suspicion of corporate manslaughter. Police are investigating along with the Health and Safety Executive.

Although this is not a site in any way connected with MGJV the type of work these operatives were undertaking is very similar to that being done on the VMR activities.

All are reminded that the key factors required to prevent such incidents are as follows:

- Check the soil type to determine the method of excavating and the control methods to be selected.
- Identify previous land use and the possibility of contaminated soil or gas pockets.
- Draw up a traffic management plan to eliminate / reduce the requirement of plant and equipment travelling or being stored close to any planned excavations.
- Plan pedestrian routes around the site to avoid walking close to or crossing open excavations.
- Identify the depth of excavations and select the appropriate control measures e.g. battering, proprietary support systems, means of access and guarding methods to prevent persons, vehicle / equipment, or any accumulation of earth or other materials from falling into an open excavation.
- Where excavations will be carried out on the highway the appointment of a competent Highways Supervisor. Install appropriate barricades and warning signs.
- Arrange for CAT scanning / trial holes of the area and mark out the position of all services located, cable locators should be used by competent persons and be accompanied by current test, calibration and inspections as appropriate for the type of equipment used.
- Identify if the conditions of the excavation may be indicative of a confined space or effected by local environmental conditions e.g. water courses. Produce emergency plan as necessary.

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