

Collapsed excavation - serious injury

Issued to: **Network Rail line managers, safety professionals and RISQS registered contractors**

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Location: Stamford Underbridge

Contact: Head of S&SD, Capital Delivery Eastern



Overview

On 30th September during installation of drainage works at Stamford Underbridge a supervisor was struck on the lower back and legs by a lump of earth that became dislodged from the vertical face of a trench.

The trench was dug to allow for track drainage to be installed and was approximately 12 metres in length, 3 metres deep and a metre wide.

The agreed methodology for the installation of the drainage included the requirement to use trench boxes. However, for two hours work had been undertaken in the trench without the trench box being used.

The supervisor was taken to hospital and required treatment for a broken pelvis.

Underlying causes

- A lack of planning to adequately co-ordinate the work and the teams involved in delivery.
- A lack of people to adequately plan and deliver the work safely.
- The physical restraints in the work area were not communicated or supported by safety critical paperwork such as accurate Task Briefing Sheets.
- The task was briefed over a month before the day of work.
- Unsafe behaviours and conditions went unchallenged due to poor perception of the risks by those involved in the work.
- Initial false statements from site staff concealed the extent of the unsafe work.
- Learning from similar events reported on the same site (high risk close calls) had not been appropriately actioned or communicated.

Key message

Where risk assessment identifies the need for trench boxes or other means of shoring / support systems then the correct equipment must be available on site and properly used.

How are Close Calls monitored and reviewed on your projects?

How do you use timely investigation and local actions to create safer sites?

The duties for managing excavation hazards are detailed in Reg 22 of the Construction Design and Management Regulations 2015.

How well do site staff understand and follow the arrangements for meeting these duties?

How do you check planned control measures are being used on site?