

## Industry Safety Alert

### **FATALITY - Excavation Collapse**

On 14th April 2010 an excavation collapse within the Utility sector resulted in the fatality of a subcontractor appointed by Balfour Beatty Utility Solutions who was laying ducting for a new high voltage cable. The majority of the excavation was to a depth of 1.4m, but at the point of collapse it was 2m deep as it passed underneath an existing 132kV cable crossing.

This incident and the one in the photograph, which almost resulted in the suffocation of a building worker when a three-metre trench collapsed on top of him, are stern reminders that we should not become complacent to the dangers of working in excavations and that a safe system of work must be in place before workers enter excavations.



#### Action Required by Managers:

- BE MINDFUL that relatively shallow excavations can also carry the potential risk of suffocation and crushing.
- ALL excavations, regardless of depth, should be assessed by a competent person for the risk of collapse and need for trench support. If there is any doubt, seek advice from your line manager.
- Pay particular ATTENTION to ground stability, changes in ground conditions, adequacy of support and undue loading to the trench edges.
- Make sure there is an adequate means of ACCESS/EGRESS
- ALWAYS check trench support/alternative safe system of work on a daily basis before work begins
- As work continues KEEP ASSESSING the working environment – have the influencing factors changed?

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**Learning: No Repeats**