

SAFETY ALERT

Shallow Trenches and Excavations

Document No: IW-HSQE-SA-20

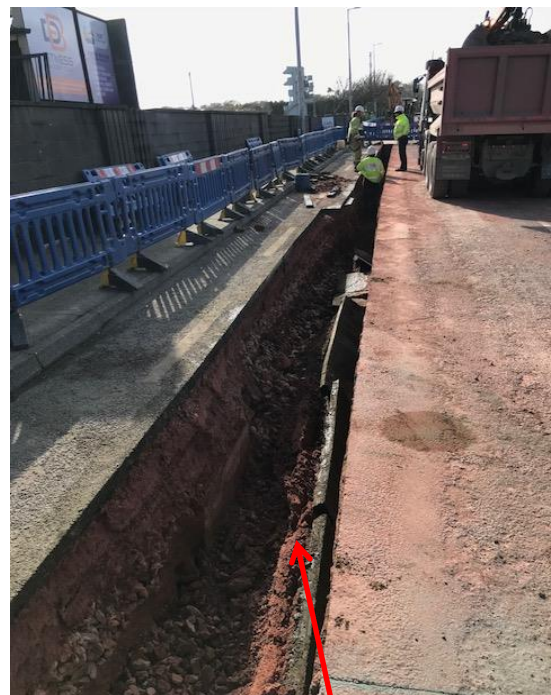
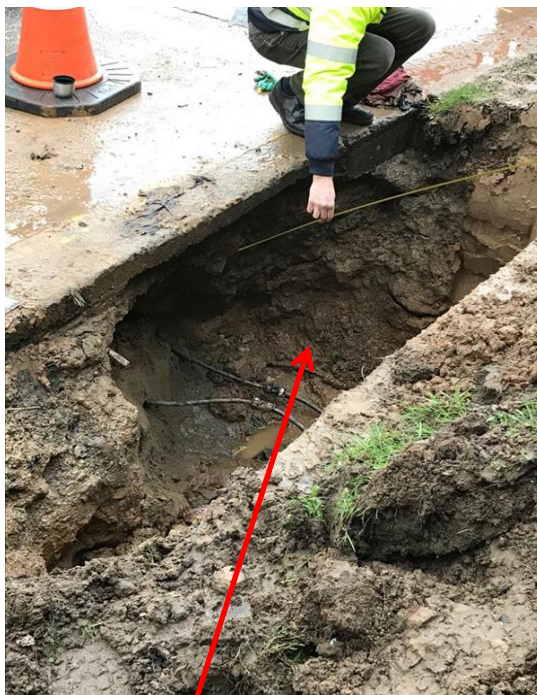
Approved By: Neil Lenehan

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1. What Happened?

A plumber was injured when a section of shallow trench collapsed on him while he was carrying out repairs to a leaking saddle valve. The injured party was bending down inside the approximately 1.3 metre deep trench in order to carry out the repairs when earth slipped behind him and pushed him against the saddle valves causing minor injuries to his knees. The trench was excavated in poor ground conditions on a grass verge and had not been battered/stepped or supported. A near miss also occurred recently on a gas infrastructure project where surface material overhanging the edge of a shallow trench collapsed as a result of being undermined during the excavation of the trench.



Partial trench collapse during water saddle valve repair works.

Collapse of undermined surface material during gas main installation works.

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worksafe
homesafe



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2. Immediate Actions

- Trench support system put in place for remainder of works.
- Briefing delivered to work crew on excavation safety with requirement to inspect and risk assess all excavations and trenches, regardless of their depth, outlined.

3. Further Actions

- Where personnel are required to work in shallow trenches and excavations (<2m) it must be ensured that they are inspected by a competent person daily, regardless of their depth, in order to determine support requirements. All inspections of such trenches and excavations should be recorded.
- Where the inspection of the trench/excavation carried out determines that there is a risk of personnel being struck, trapped or buried by a fall of earth or material, seek to batter the sides of the trench/excavation to a safe angle or step them.
- Where it is not possible to step or batter the sides of a trench or excavation, ensure that a suitable trench/excavation support system is in place.
- Ensure that surface overhangs are cut back and made safe where they have been undermined.
- Where required, ensure that a thorough examination of the trench/excavation is carried out by a competent person and recorded on form [AF3](#).
- Ensure that plant, machinery and excavated material are kept a suitable distance back from the edges of trench/excavations to prevent surcharging and collapse of the trench/excavations sides.
- Communicate the above requirements to all personnel involved in works requiring entry into excavations and trenches regardless of their depth.

4. Further Information

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For further information on this safety alert please contact hsqe@water.ie

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