

SAFETY ALERT

Am I SAFE?

Excavator Trench Collapse Incident

Document No: **IW-HSQE-SA-28**

Revision:1.00

Approved By: James Cullen

1. What Happened?

The incident occurred when a section of trench gave way under the weight of an excavator resulting in the excavator partially going over on its side. No injuries occurred but the incident had potential for far greater consequences. Operation of heavy plant close to edges of trenches and excavations may lead to surcharge of the excavation or trench faces and cause them to collapse, particularly where they haven't been adequately supported.



Aftermath of incident

2. Immediate Actions

- Excavator was removed from the trench and area was made safe.
- Works ceased in the area pending assessment of the ground conditions in the vicinity of incident location.

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3. Further Actions

- Where possible, heavy plant must be kept a suitable distance away from the edges of excavations and trenches.
- Where the operation of heavy plant along the edges of excavations and trenches is unavoidable, it must be ensured that the excavation/trench has been assessed by a competent person to determine support/battering requirements. A lack of space is not an excuse as solutions can be designed to suit any scenario. **STOP/THINK/ACT**
- The excavation of trenches must be planned to reduce the need for excavators to track back over the sides of an open section of trench.
- Excavations and trenches must be monitored continuously as excavation proceeds and any noticeable deterioration in ground conditions could cause the cessation of the excavation works pending a thorough examination of the ground conditions and consideration of support/battering requirements. Do not rely solely on ground investigation reports as ground conditions may have changed since the investigation was carried out.
- Ensure that surface overhangs are cut back and made safe where they have been undermined.

4. Further Information

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

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