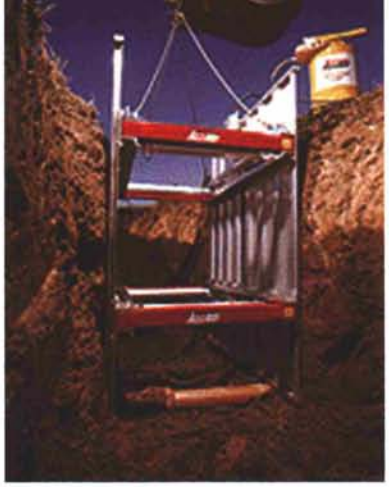
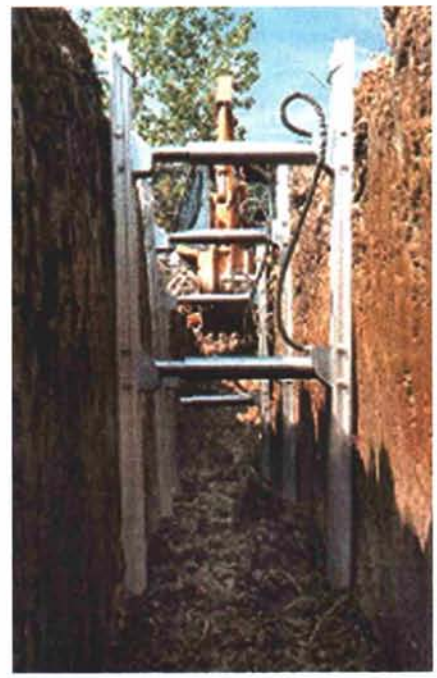


John Ekstrom *Cantigny Golf Club*

Excavation Safety: Your Life May Depend On It



A couple months ago, a worker in Bolingbrook was installing a sewer line for a new subdivision when an object struck him. His injury prevented him from exiting the trench, which was on the verge of collapsing. The trench was 10 feet deep and was cut in unstable soil. More than an hour later, rescue workers were able to pull him out after shoring the muddy walls of the trench. After an airlift to the hospital, the injured worker was released the same day.

With golf course construction or renovation, excavation work is inevitable. Included in this earth-moving process comes the subsurface installation of many feet of line and tile such as water, irrigation, sewer, gas, telephone, electric, drainage, etc.

When installing pipe, conduit, etc., the professional must know how to safely do the job. Understanding what the working conditions are before beginning this type of subsurface work is paramount. Before working underground, ask yourself several questions:

- At what depth will I be working?
- If I have to enter this hole/trench, at what depth will I need to take extra security measures to ensure the stability of the area?
- If necessary, can I make a quick exit?
- Whom can I contact if I have questions about excavation safety?

It is very important to know at what depth and in what kind of area you will be working. Most irrigation repairs or drainage installation occur within a few feet of the surface. But it is those instances that require you to go into a hole or trench below a depth at which you feel comfortable that make the work all the more nerve-wracking.

OSHA states that excavating work at or below five feet in depth requires some sort of adequate protection system.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) states that excavating work at or below five feet in depth requires some sort of adequate protection system. This protection is in the form of a sloping or shoring system of the trench. The sloping system is where the sides of the trench are tapered at an angle. This sloping is to prevent cave-ins; basically, for every one-and-a-half feet down, you need to go one foot out. Besides a sloping system, a shoring system may also be used. These shoring systems are mechanical means to prevent cave-ins. Many types of devices are used but the pictures above give you a sense of what you can use in place of sloping. They may be wooden or steel supports. However, OSHA requires that a professional engineer certify these shoring systems for your particular situation.

(continued on page 35)

In matters like this, you must also use some common sense. Always use the buddy system. If you are in a tight spot, a partner will be able to get you out or can summon help. Before you enter this type of area, have a plan of action. If the area is going to collapse, it will not stop to let you think about how you will get out. Know what you will do if you need to make a quick exit.

OSHA asks that any questions pertaining to this matter be directed to the area office. You can access the location and phone number of your area office by visiting the OSHA Web site at www.osha.gov.

The worker in Bolingbrook was lucky. During the OSHA investigation, the inspector did not see any cave-in protection measures in place to protect the worker. OSHA will further investigate the site before issuing citations or penalties. Workplace safety should never be taken lightly.

Workplace safety adds value to the workplace, to health and to life. Remember, SAFETY FIRST.

Always use the buddy system. If you are in a tight spot, a partner will be able to get you out or can summon help.

References

Lecture notes. Dr. Gary Erisman, Illinois State University.

OSHA Web site. www.osha.gov.

Attention MAGCS Offspring!

Remember, the April 25th deadline to submit your thoughts or pictures of what dad really does at work all day is fast approaching. The children of MAGCS superintendent, assistant superintendent AND commercial members are invited to participate. And if it's actually mom who's in the turf industry, go right ahead and tell or show us what mom is doing at work. Please e-mail Cathy Ralston at on_course@hotmail.com or mail comments/essays/artwork to her attention at 68 S. Waterford Dr., Round Lake, IL 60073. Photographs of dad (or mom) and child(ren) in a golf setting are also welcome for the special feature to run in our June issue.