Worker falls in trench

21 October 2019

Incident overview

While putting pickets and bunting around an excavation on a construction site in Marsden Park, a 30-year-old labourer fell 3 metres into the trench, suffering fractures to his leg.

The investigation

- SafeWork NSW inspectors responded to the incident.
- SafeWork NSW commenced an investigation to determine the cause and circumstances of the incident.
Safety information

Businesses are reminded of their duty to identify hazards and manage risks to health and safety in accordance with the provisions of the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017.

Consider ‘reasonably practicable’ control measures to manage the risks of falling into an excavation at a workplace, including:

- developing a plan – in consultation with your workers and before work begins – on managing the risks of falls in and around excavations
- considering barrier fencing to further minimise accidental encroachment – perimeter barriers should be effective
- considering a suitable location for inspection, and access and egress for emergency situations
- consulting with an engineer to determine distances where shoring, benching and battering should be used – and monitor distances, particularly after rain
- using a landing platform – or scaffold towers for big excavations – to ‘in-fill’
- preparing a safe work method statement when there is a risk of falling more than two metres – and ensure workers are inducted and supervised in its implementation
- backfilling or covering the excavation.

Further information

- Code of practice for excavation work
- Code of practice for managing the risk of falls at workplaces
- SafeWork NSW falls from heights action plan