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TOOLBOX TALK

Excavating for the Laying of PVC Sewer and Stormwater Pipe

Definition:

Excavation for the laying of pipes for plumbing services is common practice and requires individual consideration for every project. Hazards will vary depending on location to buildings, types of soils, traffic to area, size of pipes and depth and size of trench required. It is important to follow a Site Specific Assessment and the following is a guide as to what should be considered.

Identification of Hazards

- Public Safety/Traffic
- Inadequate access/ between boundaries and homes
- Collapsing of trenches
- Back strains caused by digging, lifting and twisting
- Working in the elements, sunburn, dehydration, dampness
- Other services example power, gas, phone
- Noise from the use of pneumatic equipment
- Pipes rolling in to trenches
- Solvents and glues
- Poor communication and planning

Control Measures including PPE

- Signage and bollards to warn the public
- Cover trenches to enable passing were necessary
- Remove spoil to allow for passing foot traffic, check so as not to undermine footings
- Shore up trenches if required in loose soil, always shore up if trenches exceed 900 in depth
- Consider the weight of materials, twisting and bending. Loosen up first and share the load
- Use sunburn cream, wear the correct clothing and footwear, and drink lots of water regularly
- Check the dial before you dig as supplied, check with clients for local knowledge, expose first where possible
- Use ear muffs, gloves and safety glasses
- Do not store pipes on mounds, take from safe storage and lay immediately into trenches
- Wear gloves and replace lids immediately after use. Do not inhale fumes
- Discuss with the team leader the process, follow instruction and always let people know where you are and what you are doing



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Summary

Working in trenches and in confined spaces is dangerous and should never be ill-considered or taken lightly. Personal injuries are highly likely if not considered and injuries to others are also likely if not fenced off or taken into consideration. As stated previously Site Specific Risk Assessments should be undertaken prior to the commencement of this task.