

January 13, 2020

One person working at a wind project construction site is dead and another was critically injured after a trench collapsed on the two workers. The incident happened in a remote area near Rainier WA. The death was accidental and caused by mechanical asphyxiation after being engulfed completely according to the coroner's office.

Workers were installing an underground power line in a trench with an excavator when the collapse occurred. The company was running conduit in a deep trench without shoring methods and came upon a culvert. The first worker entered the unshored trench to manually pull the conduit under the culvert with half of his body inside the culvert opening. The earth gave way covering half of his body. The second worker jumped in and started to dig him out, the other side of the trench collapsed engulfing his body completely resulting in suffocation. The first worker who survived was quickly rescued after first responders got to the scene, was removed and was in critical condition.

1. Do not enter an unprotected trench, even for a short task
2. Do not assume there will be a warning sign before a cave in or that you will have time to move out of the way.

Look around your job site and at the crew members surrounding you today.

Have all potential safety hazards that can cause accidents or fatalities been identified? Are you going to stop a fellow crew member who does not follow safety procedures? Do you have an established emergency response program, and do you know what to do?