



SAFETY ALERT # 28



October 31, 2007

In the interest of keeping everyone safe CAMSAFETY will be sharing injury information with preliminary root cause analysis. This information is intended to make you think not assess blame. If you have an incident that you would like to share send us the information and we will pass it along.

QUICK THINKING & TRAINING AVERT A SURE DROWNING

What Happened

Three workers had finished using a mini-excavator, 120 feet below the ground, to dig a horizontal tunnel that would later be filled with pipe to continue a Combined Sewer Overflow project. Waiting for the crane to lift the excavator and the three men out of the hole, one of the workers said he heard a sound like rushing air, followed by some small pebbles that fell into their hole. Starting as a trickle the infusion of water quickly grew into a torrent. Although industrial pumps were in the hole they were unable to keep up with the flow. The workers had to climb to walls to keep ahead of the rapidly rising water, water which quickly shorted out the electricity plunging the men into complete darkness. An alert crane operator was able to lower a man-basket into the hole and pull all three to safety.



Prevention:

In this case the prevention came before the incident – what a novel idea. The crane operator and one of the workers in the hole had completed a rescue training course just two days prior to this incident. With no light in the hole one of the trapped workers was able to find the basket and was lifted. Once at the top he immediately directed the crane operator to lower him back down so he could assist the other two. All in all it was just some quick, pre-planned action that saved three workers.

The importance of per-planning and training cannot be overemphasized. Clearly in this case it saved three men who all had wives and young children to go home to. Although this information didn't come out in any of the reports I would guess that none of the people related to this project would have suspected that what did happen could happen. It did, and they were ready. We all know what happens to the human brain in an emergency, pre-planning and training help to limit the decisions that have to be made in a crisis making success a lot more likely. This alert crane operator had an idea of what he needed to do based on the training he had just two days before. Now it's etched in his brain, thankfully, with a good outcome.

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<http://www.metrowestdailynews.com>