



SAFETY IS NO ACCIDENT

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Please note: In my last article there was a misprint on my part, it read that the as-built was 30" off; it should have been 30 ft. off. Now it makes more sense.

You don't need to know the whole alphabet of Safety. The A, B, C of it will save you if you follow it: Always Be Careful. ~Colorado School of Mines Magazine, Golden, Colorado, August 1918

How many times have we ignored safety on the job site? More than we can possibly count. The news headlines pop out at you. "Workers drowned in construction ditch when water main ruptures" This happened in October of 2016.

November, 2016, "Construction worker dies when cut off saw he was using to cut a water main kicked back and hit him in the throat"

Jan, 2017, "Three utility workers killed from poisonous fumes in a manhole, firefighter hospitalized". Were safety procedures followed? Being the victim of a construction cave in many years ago, reading these headlines has the memories come flooding back.

Dartmouth St., Boston, MA, October 2016. The trench was 20 feet in length and between 12 and 15 feet deep. A water main ruptured, two men escaped, two could not. There was a frantic attempt to rescue the two to no avail. By the time firefighters arrived, the whole street was flooded. It was unclear how the water main had ruptured. The contractor in question had a lengthy history of serious safety violations and had faced tens of thousands of dollars in fines from OSHA.

Duxbury, MA, November 2016. A construction worker was killed when the gas powered cut off saw kicked back catching him in the throat. A coworker held him upright and applied pressure till paramedics arrived. He was transported to a hospital where he died from his injuries. OSHA is investigating.

Key Largo, FL, January 2017. While investigating an issue at a manhole, a worker removed the manhole cover and climbed 15 feet into the ground. A coworker sensing a problem because of loss of communication, followed him in. A third worker sensing a problem also entered the manhole. All were overcome from poisonous gas. A firefighter trying desperately to rescue them within seconds was overcome. He was flown to the local hospital where he was listed in critical condition. The hole, just wide enough to fit a body, was filled with Hydrogen Sulfide, and Methane gas.



OSHA is investigating.

From Wikipedia, OSHA is an agency of the US Department of Labor. Congress established the agency under the Occupational Safety and Health Act. Signed into law by President Nixon 12-29-1970. OSHA's mission, to "assure safe and healthful working conditions for working men and women by setting and enforcing standards and by providing training, outreach,

education, and assistance". Here in New York municipalities are under the jurisdiction of, New York Public Employees Safety and Health (PESH). New York PESH has generally adopted all OSHA standards applicable to state and local government employment.

Why do we take chances? Why do we tell ourselves nothing can happen? In the "blink of an eye" everything can change. We spend hours, upon hours training to be safe. We have a trained "Competent Person" to guide us on the job. Countless times in my time as a water system operator I, myself, have taken chances. We use the excuse, "it will be a quick in and out". When I was trapped in the cave in, 14 feet in the ground with no safety plan to back me, I had no warning. I was buried. I was trapped. If there was a trench box in place, I would have been safe. In the Dartmouth Mass accident, apparently there was no trench box in place. The article stated "they had to bring in a trench box" to complete the recovery. Duxbury Mass, was the saw guard in place? Was the operator properly trained? We do not know. Key Largo FL, there were no harnesses, no tripod, no air sniffer, no air circulation. Were they not trained?

Safety is everyone's business. We all have the obligation to do our jobs safely and return home to our families. There needs to be a competent person on site to ensure the safety and well being of the workers and the public. Many of the small systems I visit operate with no more than 2 people. These systems have a backup plan to bring in the right people to do the job safely. Safety is no accident. Quality on Tap!

I hope to see you in my travels. If you would like to contact me:
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