In January 2016, a 36-year-old pipelayer died when the wall of the trench he was working in collapsed and buried him. The incident happened at a residential job site where the employer, the victim, and another worker were replacing a sewer line. The employer runs a small business that does sewer and drainage installation and repair work. The crew had been working at the job site for a week. There had been over three inches of rain during this time. Several trenches were dug in soil to allow workers to remove old pipes and install new pipes. The soil was unstable wet, loamy sand, classified as “Type C” soil. On the day of the incident, the crew was nearly finished with the project. The victim entered a trench to finish work on the sewer line connection to the house. The trench was 21 inches wide by 60 inches long and 7 feet deep. It was alongside a house foundation with a cement walkway on the other side. There was no protective system in the trench (though there was a hydraulic shoring cylinder near the bottom on one side). At 10:30 a.m., a wall of the trench collapsed, burying the victim. The coworker contacted emergency services and then attempted to dig out the collapsed trench. Fire department emergency response team personnel arrived on the scene within a few minutes. The rescue attempt soon changed to a recovery effort. The victim was declared dead at the scene. He died of compressional asphyxia.

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