**MEMBER BULLETIN**

August 18, 2022

**MOL Inspection Blitz – Trench Safety**

The Ministry of Labour will be continuing with its trench safety blitz.

Inspectors will check that employers, supervisors, and workers are complying with requirements under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and its regulations.

The Ministry inspectors will visit a range of construction projects where trenches are being dug, including sites:

* where sewers, watermains and utilities are being installed;
* with a high incidence of lost-time injuries involving excavation workers;
* where complaints have been received; and,
* where there is a history of non-compliance.

Inspectors will take enforcement action, as appropriate, in response to any violations of the OHSA and its regulations. Key areas of focus will include:

* **Trench work notification:** Inspectors will check that employers are following requirements to submit the appropriate notice (either a Notice of Project or Trench Notice) to the Ministry of Labour, when required.
* **Trench wall support:** Inspectors will check that trench support systems are in place or excavation walls are properly sloped. They will also check that support systems are designed by a professional engineer if the systems are prefabricated, hydraulic or engineered. Inspectors will check that employers are determining the site’s soil type to ascertain the strength and stability of the excavation walls. Inspectors will also check that trench and excavation walls are being stripped of any loose rock or other material that could slide, roll or fall on a worker. Inspectors will check that constructors are taking appropriate precautions to prevent damage to nearby structures, including employing a professional engineer to specify in writing any precautions to be taken. They will also check that safe access and egress is available to workers in and out of trenches.
* **Utilities locations:** Inspectors will check that before beginning work, employers identify, locate and mark utilities to prevent worker contact with gas lines, electrical conductors and other services during excavations. They will also check that utility owners supervise the uncovering of potentially hazardous utilities if the services cannot be disconnected during the excavation.
* **Safety measures:** Inspectors will check that employers have measures and procedures in place to prevent slip, trip and fall hazards. They will also check that a barrier at least 1.1 metres (42 inches) in height is provided, when required, at the top of an excavation if it does not meet regulatory slope requirements and is more than 2.4 metres deep. Inspectors will check that a clear work space of at least 450 millimetres (18 inches) is maintained between the excavation’s wall and any work platform.

If you have any questions, please contact Patrick McManus (905-629-7766 or patrick.mcmanus@oswca.org).