

N E W S R E L E A S E

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Cal/OSHA Cites Pipe Installation Contractor for Fatal Trench Collapse in Daly City

Foster City—Cal/OSHA has cited Bay Area contractor Platinum Pipeline, Inc. \$242,600 for failing to protect employees working in a trench at a construction site. Investigators determined the Livermore company committed willful-serious safety violations by instructing employees to continue grading the bottom of the trench without providing any protection, even after identifying the soil as unstable. As a result, a 14-foot-high excavation wall collapsed and killed one of the workers on July 27, 2018.

“Excavations must be properly shored, sloped or shielded before workers enter,” said Cal/OSHA Chief Juliann Sum. “The employer overseeing this operation understood the hazards, but did not take the necessary steps to protect its workers.”

Platinum Pipeline, Inc. workers were digging trenches to install two storm drain pipes at a residential construction site in Daly City. Three of the five workers were trained and competent in excavation, and the ends of the trench had been sloped to prevent cave-ins. However, one side was not sloped because of concerns that a nearby utility pole might fall.

One of the operators observed a large crack in the soft dirt of the unprotected wall. Two workers were instructed to be cautious but work was allowed to proceed. When the unprotected wall collapsed, one worker escaped, but the second worker was fatally crushed.

Cal/OSHA cited Platinum Pipeline, Inc. for 10 violations, including two classified as willful-serious accident-related, five serious and three general. The willful-serious accident-related violations were cited for failing to ensure that no employees were in the trench until an adequate protective system was put in place to ensure their safety, and for failing to remove workers from an excavation after a competent person observed cave-in hazards. The serious category violations included the employer’s failure to secure the utility pole and various excavation safety hazards such as placing excavated material too close to the edge of the excavation.

A serious violation is cited when there is a realistic possibility that death or serious harm could result from the actual hazardous condition. A willful violation is cited when the employer is aware of the law and violates it nevertheless, or when the employer is aware of the hazardous condition and takes no reasonable steps to address it.

Cal/OSHA offers [extensive information and resources](#) on working safely in the construction industry, including how to safely perform [trench and excavation operations](#). Before starting excavation work, the approximate locations of all underground installations that may be encountered during excavation operations must be determined and the proper notification must be made to the appropriate agency in either [Northern](#) or [Southern California](#). A [permit](#) from the local Cal/OSHA district office must be obtained before the construction of excavations five feet or deeper into which any person is required to descend.

Cal/OSHA helps protect workers from health and safety hazards on the job in almost every workplace in California. [Cal/OSHA's Consultation Services Branch](#) provides free and voluntary assistance to employers to improve their health and safety programs. Employers should call (800) 963-9424 for assistance from Cal/OSHA Consultation Services.

Employees with work-related questions or complaints may contact DIR's Call Center in English or Spanish at 844-LABOR-DIR (844-522-6734). The California Workers' Information line at 866-924-9757 provides recorded information in English and Spanish on a variety of work-related topics. Complaints can also be filed confidentially with [Cal/OSHA district offices](#).

Members of the press may contact Peter Melton or Jeanne-Mairie Duval at (510) 286-1161, and are encouraged to [subscribe to get email alerts](#) on DIR's press releases or other departmental updates.

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