

SAFETY MATTERS



Safety Matters is intended to promote discussions of safety issues among underground construction professionals. You should always read and understand the operator's manual before operating any equipment. For additional information, please e-mail safety@ditchwitch.com.

TOPIC:

Microtrenching -- TRENCHING ON ROADWAYS FOR FIBER INSTALLATION

POTENTIAL HAZARDS

- Caught in
- Drawn into
- Buried utilities
- Noise
- Struck by
- Laceration
- Silica Dust
- Traffic

PRECAUTIONS

- ALWAYS have all underground utilities located prior to trenching (call 811 in USA). Know and follow local regulations for excavating near utilities.
- Stay away and keep others at least 6 feet (1.8 m) away from machine and moving parts of machine. Stop machine if others get too close.
- Learn how to use all controls prior to operating. Refer to your equipment's operator's manual for proper use and control information.
- ALWAYS wear the seatbelt provided with a roll-over protective structure (ROPS).
- Keep operator presence and control systems operating correctly.
- Stop trenching to make trench observations such as trench depth.
- Keep saw and microtrencher well maintained.
- Use a vacuum system to help control dust in the work environment.
- Traffic from roadways and jobsite traffic must be controlled with proper protective measures. In the US, refer to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways.
- Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) such as reflective vests, hard hats, eye protection, hearing protection, etc.
- Keep cover installed over saw blade while it is in operation.
- Have procedures in place regarding personnel walking in between machines or vehicles during operation.
- While using vacuum systems and other equipment, always ensure jobsite security by having the planned travel route cleared of any obstacles and personnel.

INFORMATION/FACTS

- Machine will move when digging starts.
- Saw blade will be hot after cutting asphalt.
- Objects, such as rocks and rebar, can be thrown by the moving saw blade.
- Pavement contains crystalline silica which can cause silicosis if inhaled. Vacuum systems can be used to help control dust.
 - The current OSHA permissible exposure limit (PEL) for respirable crystalline silica (quartz) is 50 µg/m³ as an 8-hour time-weighted average. Visit OSHA's website for more information.

TALES FROM THE TRENCH

- An operator was micro-trenching behind a truck vacuum system. The operator was watching the trench behind the machine. The truck vacuum system had reached the end of the jobsite controlled location. The coworker walked to the rear of the truck vacuum system. The operator did not notice the truck ahead had stopped and crushed the coworker between the microtrencher and truck.
- While working near a roadway, an operator decided to cross the road from one secure jobsite to the next. Due to the low speed of the machine and the lack of traffic control, the microtrencher was hit by a passenger vehicle.
- The crew was almost complete with a job as dusk, when a passenger vehicle came too close to the cone and clipped a coworker with the vehicle. The coworker was not wearing a reflective vest.

**DON'T LEARN SAFETY
BY ACCIDENT**

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