

Trenching Scenario

Freddy, Bill, and Ted of ACME Excavation work on a large hospital construction project. Freddy had worked for ACME for over 10 years as a heavy equipment operator, and he also is the supervisor for this job. Bill and Ted both started as laborers for ACME about 3 months ago, but recently were allowed to install pipe. The job had been delayed for two weeks due to cold weather and they were all happy to finally start. ACME's contract consisted of digging two trenches (one for wastewater and one for culinary water). The first trench was about 4 feet deep and was completed in a few days. For the second line Freddy dug a trench about 6 feet deep. Freddy made sure to use a trench box as the trench was over 5 feet in depth, and he had recently completed a trenching safety class. Knowing the trench was going to require a trench box (sloping wasn't practical) Freddy had brought two sections of trench box from the storage yard. These were put in place, but weren't quite long enough to extend the length of the full trench. This resulted in an unprotected gap at one end of the trench of about two feet in length. Freddy told the employees that because the end wasn't protected they needed to be careful and no work would be allowed on this end until they moved the trench box. The access ladder was placed in the middle of the trench box. However, because it got in the way, the ladder was moved that afternoon to the end of the trench outside the box. All three employees used the ladder to climb in and out of the trench.

On the next day (Friday) there was sleet in the morning and it soon changed to a cold rain. Working in the rain made the job slower and Freddy was worried they wouldn't be able to finish until the next work day (Monday). He encouraged Bill and Ted to work faster and even helped them with the pipe more than he normally would. At 2 PM while Bill and Ted were inside the trench box a small section of the trench wall opposite the ladder partially collapsed. The bottom two rungs of the ladder were buried with dirt, but Bill was able to pull it out of the pile from inside the trench box. The ladder appeared to be undamaged and Bill set it up inside the box so he and Ted could climb out and talk with Freddy. This slowed the job a little, but they quickly removed most of the extra soil with the backhoe. Afterwards Ted went to put the ladder back at the end of the trench, but Freddy told him they needed to keep it inside the box from now on or they might get in trouble, and he didn't want to take any more chances. The rest of the pipe was installed, and after inspection the trench box was removed and the trench was back filled. Because they worked fast, they were still able to leave the jobsite about 15 minutes early and enjoy the weekend. A few days later the General Contractor mentioned to the ACME President that he was happy the hospital pipe job was done right and completed on time. This compliment was passed on to Freddy and the company was asked to do several more jobs that summer.

Based on this scenario, how do you think Freddy's leadership and decision making abilities would be rated in your organization?

Horrible 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Excellent