

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. Around 2 PM Ted had to climb out to retrieve a pipe wrench from the truck. As he attempted to step onto the ladder his back foot struck the opposite trench wall causing a section of the soil to collapse, burying him up to his abdomen. Bill immediately called 911 as Freddy tried to carefully remove the dirt with the bucket. The paramedics arrived within minutes of the 911 call and after placing shoring against a section of the trench wall were able to free Ted. They rushed him to the hospital. Ted survived, but had significant back and internal injuries as well as a leg fracture. The resulting claim costs were over \$200,000, not to mention OSHA fines of \$21,000. ACME Excavation was not considered for any more jobs with this General Contractor. Freddy was terminated a couple weeks later and Bill continued to work with ACME for several months before changing jobs.

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