

Surroundings



March 2003

An A. D. Marble & Company Publication

Fieldwork Safety: Planning for the Upcoming Season



David Weinberg
Archaeologist

Mr. Weinberg directs and conducts all phases and aspects of archaeological excavations, including research, laboratory techniques, processing, and curation. He has experience in soil characterization and site cartography, and is skilled in field, studio, and architectural photography.

Environmental planning and cultural resource studies often necessitate the field investigator to visit unfamiliar and potentially hazardous locations. As spring approaches and outside activities are increasing, the topic of safety can take on growing importance in the field. The key to having a safe fieldwork environment begins before the actual field investigation is initiated. Establish and disseminate a corporate Health & Safety procedures handbook that outlines safe work practices, both in and out of the office. Employee training, early project coordination, and established field practices serve to promote an informed workforce and reduce the chances of personal injury. However, the goals of fieldwork safety are not only to take the necessary steps to ensure the worker's safety but also to protect the general public and properties.

Hazard recognition and avoidance can play an important role in the field. Specific, and sometimes mandated, training is available to teach these various techniques and review appropriate tools used to assess potentially hazardous situations. The U.S. Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) provides guidelines for courses to enable the fieldworker to maintain a healthy and safe work environment (Hazardous Waste 24- and 40-Hour Certification [CFR 29 1910.120]). Although not mandated for non-hazardous waste operations, these courses can also provide information on safe trench and excavation practices. The identification of the Prime Consultant and/or Sub-Contractor safety issues and concerns should be incorporated into your field approach strategy. Be aware of others in the area and their activities.

Several key items are essential for all field activities, including:

- 1) Conduct a site environment awareness and characterization (hazard assessment) prior to the initiation of the field study and regularly on-site. First aid and CPR training are important components in promoting a safe field environment. Remote field surveys often place an individual far from professional emergency assistance. Familiarity with first aid and on-site treatment techniques is essential.
- 2) Power tools are sometimes employed during the course of an investigation. A thorough review of the operation and maintenance of any machine should be made prior to field activities. The operator must also be familiar with safe fuel storage and handling techniques.

Linking Environmental Issues t

o

A.D. Marble & Company
375 East Elm Street
Suite 200
Conshohocken, PA 19428

3) Initiate your local or regional "One Call System" to identify and mark out buried utilities if mechanical excavation is proposed. Electrical and gas lines are significant dangers and may not be deeply buried in residential settings. Fiber optic cables, while not posing a particular physical threat, are an extreme cost liability if accidentally severed.

4) Review local hunting seasons and schedule fieldwork accordingly if working in potentially attractive game areas. Wear blaze-orange clothing to further ensure added visibility.



5) Conduct an on-site general safety review with field team members. Provide adequate safety and First Aid equipment appropriate for the tasks to be performed, site location, hazards anticipated, and for the number of individuals present.

6) Be aware of your surroundings, within the urban or rural environments; utilize the buddy system if appropriate. Have orienteering and communication items (compass, whistle, and map) available. Maintain an intra- and extra-site communications capability.

7) Secure and identify potentially hazardous work areas; barricades, fencing, caution tape and signage can all aid in keeping a work area safe, especially near excavation locales. Be familiar with and obey trench safety and excavation rules. Employ protective headgear and ear/eye protection when excavation machines or other tools are utilized.

Archaeologists using safe techniques, including fencing from exposed excavation.

8) Anticipate weather-related and biological hazards and wear appropriate clothing.

9) Notify the supervisor of any potential hazards and report any safety incidents

Proper advance planning and preparedness can greatly increase the safe completion of your field efforts. However, part of planning is to expect the unexpected, and personnel should be aware of the closest emergency services location and routes. This information and facility phone number should be posted at a job site and with the field vehicle. Think ahead, be alert, and work safely.



A.D. Marble & Company
375 East Elm Street
Suite 200
Conshohocken, PA 19428