

## Contractor fined \$60,000 for death of worker

by Edmond Ng

**Singapore** - A contractor has been fined for causing the death of a worker due to its failure in complying with safety measures.

The contractor, Caravelle Construction and Development Pte Ltd, pleaded guilty on March 18, 2003 to causing the death of the worker under the Factories Act. The Court has fined the contractor a maximum penalty of \$50,000 for failing to provide adequate piling and bracing against the side of an excavation and another \$10,000 for failing to place excavated material at least 610mm away from the edge of the excavation.

The worker who died in the accident was an employee of IRE Corporation Ltd, a sub contractor hired by Caravelle Construction and Development Pte Ltd to carry out the construction of a multi-storey car park at the Jalan Bukit Merah worksite. The construction was part of a project awarded to the contractor by the Housing Development Board for a major upgrading work at the worksite.

At the time of the accident that occurred on December 4, 2002, the deceased was working with a co-worker to trim the side of the excavation with shovels. The soil from the side of the excavation suddenly slid down and buried him up to his waist. The deceased was immediately rescued and sent to the hospital where he passed away on the same day due to multiple injuries consistent with being crushed by heavy force. Investigations revealed that at the time of the accident, the excavation that the deceased and his co-worker were working in was about 2.9m deep. No protection to prevent the soil from collapsing and hitting the workers working inside was available at the sides of the excavation. Investigations also revealed that excavated soil was also placed at about 200mm from the edge of the excavation. In such conditions, the soil could have fallen off the edge of the excavation and hit the workers who was still be inside the excavation. When that happened, the soil would have exerted its weight onto the sides of the excavation, thereby increasing the possibility of the face to collapse.

Under the Factories (Building Operations and Work of Engineering Construction) Regulations, the sides of an excavation must be provided with suitable protection, to prevent the sides from collapsing. In addition, no load is allowed to be placed within 200mm from the edge of the excavation.

The Ministry of Manpower takes a serious view of contractors' failure to adhere to safety measures and would like to remind all factory occupiers and contractors that measures must be taken to ensure the safety of workers working inside excavation. The Ministry says that it will not hesitate to take legal action against any factory occupier or contractor found flouting safety rules.