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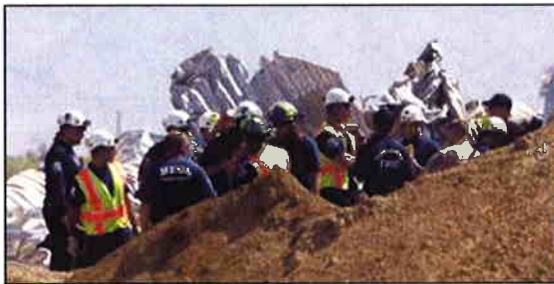
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May 17, 2007

## Worker dies after being buried alive in Queen Creek

By Christian Richardson  
Tribune



*Fire personnel prepare to remove a construction worker who was killed after being buried alive inside a collapsed pipe inside a trench at a construction site in Queen Creek Thursday.*

*Tribune*

A 25-year-old construction worker helping lay large drainage pipes in a hole died after a wall of dirt crushed him inside a pipe Thursday morning near downtown Queen Creek.

Watch Tribune reporter Nicole Beyer's report

Rescue workers dug for four hours to find Marcos Garcia of Mesa, who had sought refuge inside the corrugated metal pipe when the dirt began pouring down, authorities said.

The incident came a day after falling dirt crushed another pipe at the Rittenhouse and Ellsworth roads work site. The mangled metal from Wednesday still sat on the property during the rescue attempt.

The construction company, S.J. Louis Construction of Phoenix, also received a non-serious citation last month from the Arizona Division of Occupational Safety and Health for work being done at Ocotillo and Ellsworth roads, said the agency's director Darin Perkins. The citation came at that location due to an improper slope at an excavation site, Perkins said.

The site of Thursday's accident is part of a Queen Creek downtown revitalization project and will one day house a Super Wal-Mart and other businesses in a retail district called Cornerstone, said John Kross, Queen Creek town manager.

Beginning at 8:30 a.m., emergency personnel from Mesa, Gilbert, Apache Junction and Rural/Metro used a

backhoe and then shovels to dig through 6 to 8 feet of dirt to access the pipe, said Alison Cooper, Rural/Metro Fire Department spokeswoman. The pipe was once 10 to 14 feet in diameter and about 25 feet long but was smashed like a pancake.

A little after 12:30 p.m. firefighters carried Garcia's body in a yellow body bag out of the 15-foot deep hole.

Garcia and another man, who authorities won't identify, had been working in the hole placing three corrugated pipes alongside each other to be used for rain water retention.

When the dirt started pouring into the hole the other man ran out and Garcia escaped into the pipe, Cooper said. Rescue workers say that if he had gone in another five feet he might have lived.

The other worker was transported by ambulance to Mercy Gilbert Medical Center with a leg fracture.

S.J. Louis Construction's Phoenix office referred calls to the home office in St. Cloud, Minn.

"At this time we have no comment about the situation," said a woman who answered the phone. She declined to give her name and would not say if the company was investigating the accident.

Dallas Frost, who works for Construction 70, which supplies heavy equipment to sites such as this one, said working in dirt holes can be perilous.

"It's a little scary, that's why I don't do dirt, and stay on top of the hole," Frost said.

The Arizona Division of Occupational Safety and Health and the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office are investigating the accident.

Sheriff's Office spokesman Doug Matteson said the sheriff's office conducts a criminal investigation any time there is a work site death to see if there were any code violations or wrongdoing.

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