Forks, Spades, and Hoes — Landscaping Fatality File

Landscaping Accident Involving a Spade — May 2023 Incident Report

On May 15, 2023, a fatal accident involving a spade occurred in a residential landscaping project in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The incident resulted in the death of a 28-year-old landscaping worker, Robert Mitchell. Mitchell was using a spade to dig a trench for a new garden bed when the accident happened.

According to the investigation, Mitchell was attempting to remove a large rock embedded in the soil. While exerting significant force on the spade to dislodge the rock, the tool suddenly slipped, causing him to lose balance and fall backward onto another sharp tool. The impact caused severe internal injuries. Despite immediate medical attention from his coworkers and emergency services, Mitchell was pronounced dead at the scene.

The investigation highlighted several contributing factors, including the use of improper techniques for removing heavy objects and the lack of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). It was also noted that Mitchell was working alone in that section of the garden, which delayed the response time.

Following this incident, the landscaping company has implemented stricter safety protocols, including mandatory PPE use, team-based tasks for heavy-duty work, and comprehensive training sessions on safe digging practices and handling heavy objects to prevent such tragedies in the future.