

Excavations and Buried Services — Safe System of Work

Display a copy where the work is done.

Before you start

- Get the service plans and read them. Then use a cable avoidance tool anyway.
- Mark up what you find on the ground.
- Decide the support method before you break ground, not when the sides start moving.
- Check the excavation has been inspected this shift by a competent person and the record signed.
- Check access ladders are in place and secured.
- Check spoil is at least a metre back and the barriers are up.

The numbers that get checked

Item	Requirement	Why
Weight of soil	Over a tonne per cubic metre	Which is why a partial collapse kills
Depth that can kill	People die in excavations under 1.5 metres	Depth is not the test. Support every excavation people enter
Inspection	Start of EVERY shift by a competent person	Plus after any event affecting stability and after any fall of material
Spoil	At least 1 metre back from the edge	Spoil at the edge both loads the side and falls in
Buried services	Plans AND locator AND safe digging practice	All three. Any one alone is not enough
Near a known service	Hand dig	Do not use mechanical excavation over a marked service
After rain	Re-inspect before anyone enters	Rain is an event affecting stability

While you are working

- Never enter an unsupported excavation people can be buried in.
- Hand dig within the safe distance of any known service.
- Keep spoil, plant and materials back from the edge.
- Watch for movement, cracking or water. Get out and report it.
- Stop and re-inspect after rain or after any plant works close by.

Stop immediately if

- You see cracking, bulging, slumping or any movement of the sides.
- Water starts entering the excavation.
- You strike or expose any service you were not expecting.
- The inspection record for this shift is missing.
- Support has been removed or damaged.

- You cannot get out quickly.

Scope and limitations — read before use

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