Excavation Checklist

A trenching and excavation safety check covering protective systems, utilities and access.

Planning and Utilities

- [ ] Confirm underground utilities are located, marked and protected before digging.
- [ ] Verify the utility locating service was contacted within the required window.
- [ ] Identify overhead power lines and maintain safe clearance distances.
- [ ] Review soil type and site conditions before selecting a protective system.
  Soil classification must be made by the competent person.
- [ ] Confirm surface encumbrances and structures are supported or removed.
- [ ] Check the weather forecast and plan for rain or freeze-thaw effects.

Protective Systems

- [ ] Confirm a protective system is in place for excavations five feet or deeper.
- [ ] Verify sloping or benching matches the soil classification.
- [ ] Check that shoring or shielding is installed and rated for the trench.
- [ ] Confirm trench boxes extend high enough and are used correctly.
  Excavations over twenty feet deep require an engineered design.
- [ ] Verify spoil piles are kept at least two feet from the trench edge.

Competent Person and Inspection

- [ ] Confirm a competent person is assigned and on site.
- [ ] Verify daily inspections are completed before each shift.
- [ ] Check that the excavation is re-inspected after rain, vibration or changes.
- [ ] Confirm the competent person can stop work and order corrections.
- [ ] Verify inspections and findings are documented.

Access, Egress and Edge Protection

- [ ] Confirm a ladder, ramp or steps is within twenty-five feet of workers.
- [ ] Check that the means of egress is in the protected zone.
- [ ] Verify barricades and warning signs are posted around the excavation.
- [ ] Confirm edge protection for adjacent pedestrian and vehicle areas.
  Keep equipment and vehicles back from the trench edge.
- [ ] Check that crossing points over the trench are guarded where used.

Atmosphere and Water Hazards

- [ ] Test the atmosphere where hazardous gases or low oxygen may exist.
- [ ] Provide ventilation or controls if a hazardous atmosphere is present.
- [ ] Confirm water accumulation is controlled with pumps and monitoring.
- [ ] Verify workers do not enter where water control is inadequate.
  Water removal must be monitored by the competent person.

- [ ] Check for hazardous atmospheres before re-entry after a break.

Workers and Equipment

- [ ] Confirm workers wear required PPE and high-visibility clothing.
- [ ] Verify only essential personnel are in or near the excavation.
- [ ] Check that mobile equipment is kept a safe distance from the edge.
- [ ] Confirm a rescue and emergency plan is in place for the excavation.
- [ ] Verify workers are trained on excavation hazards and procedures.
- [ ] Important: this is general guidance only and does not replace OSHA regulations, engineering design, formal training or your employer's safety program; confirm requirements with a qualified or competent person.