

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.