

Excavation and Trenching Procedure

SAMPLE

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Purpose

This Excavation and Trenching Procedure sets out how [Company Name] plans, undertakes and monitors excavation and trenching activities so they are carried out safely and in compliance with applicable work health and safety (WHS) legislation, Codes of Practice and Australian Standards.

It applies to all excavations and trenches, including but not limited to: - Service trenches for plumbing, gas, electrical and communications - Footings and foundations for buildings and retaining walls - Bulk earthworks for roads, subdivisions and landscaping - Post holes and augered excavations for fencing and structures

This procedure is to be used in conjunction with [Company Name]'s WHS Management System, Safe Work Method Statements (SWMS) and site-specific risk assessments.

Scope

This procedure applies to:

- All workers of [Company Name], including managers, supervisors, leading hands, plant operators, plumbers, gasfitters, labourers, landscapers and fencing crews
- Contractors, subcontractors and labour hire workers engaged by [Company Name]
- All sites where [Company Name] carries out excavation or trenching activities, including civil construction sites, residential and commercial building sites, roadworks, and landscaping projects and rural properties.

It covers the full lifecycle of excavation and trenching tasks, including: - Planning and design - Consultation and notification - Site establishment - Locating and protecting underground services - Excavation, trenching and backfilling - Shoring, benching, battering and shielding - Access and egress - Working in and around excavations - Monitoring, inspection and maintenance - Emergency response and incident management

References and Legislative Requirements

This procedure has been developed with reference to the following (as applicable in each state or territory):

- Work Health and Safety Act
- Work Health and Safety Regulation (including provisions relating to excavation work and high risk construction work)
- Safe Work Australia Model Code of Practice: Excavation Work
- Safe Work Australia Model Code of Practice: Construction Work
- Relevant state or territory Codes of Practice and guidance material for excavation and trenching
- AS/NZS 3012 Electrical installations – Construction and demolition sites

- AS 1657 Fixed platforms, walkways, stairways and ladders
- AS/NZS 4801 and/or ISO 45001 Occupational health and safety management systems (where adopted by [Company Name])

[Company Name] will monitor changes to legislation, standards and guidance material and review this procedure accordingly.

Definitions

Term	Definition

Key Definitions

- **Excavation:** A hole, cavity, trench or depression formed by cutting, digging or scooping.
- **Trench:** A horizontal or inclined long narrow excavation where the length is greater than the width, and the depth is greater than 1.5 m or as defined by relevant legislation.
- **Shoring:** A structural system used to support the sides of an excavation to prevent collapse.
- **Benching:** The forming of one or a series of horizontal levels or steps in the sides of an excavation to reduce the risk of collapse.
- **Sloping:** The shaping of the sides of an excavation to a safe angle to reduce the risk of collapse.
- **Principal Contractor:** The person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) appointed as principal contractor for a construction project, as defined in WHS legislation.
- **Competent person:** A person who has acquired, through training, qualification or experience, the knowledge and skills to carry out a task.
- **High risk construction work (HRCW):** Construction work that involves a risk of a person falling more than 2 m, work in or near a trench or shaft deeper than 1.5 m, work in or near a confined space, or other activities defined in WHS legislation.
- **Underground essential services:** Includes gas, water, sewer, stormwater, electricity, telecommunications and other buried services.

Roles and Responsibilities

Officers (Company Directors and Senior Management)

- Ensure adequate resources (people, plant, equipment, training and time) are provided to implement this procedure.

- Verify that excavation and trenching risks are identified, assessed and controlled in accordance with WHS legislation.
- Review WHS performance, incident reports and audit findings related to excavation work.

Project Managers / Site Managers

- Plan excavation and trenching activities as part of project planning and programming.
- Ensure SWMS are prepared, reviewed and implemented for excavation and trenching high risk construction work.
- Confirm that underground services are identified and that relevant authorities and asset owners are consulted.
- Ensure competent persons are engaged to design, install and inspect shoring, benching, battering and shoring systems.
- Provide information, training and instruction to workers and contractors on this procedure.
- Ensure appropriate emergency plans and rescue equipment are in place.

Supervisors / Leading Hands

- Implement this procedure on site and ensure workers follow all requirements.
- Conduct site-specific risk assessments and pre-start checks prior to excavation.
- Verify that all necessary permits, Dial Before You Dig information and service maps are obtained and available.
- Ensure exclusion zones, barricades, signage and traffic management controls are in place and maintained.
- Monitor weather, ground conditions and adjacent activities that may affect excavation stability.
- Stop work if conditions become unsafe and arrange for reassessment.

Plant Operators (Excavators, Backhoes, Skid Steers, Augers)

- Operate plant in accordance with manufacturer's instructions, competency requirements and [Company Name] procedures.
- Participate in pre-start inspections, risk assessments and toolbox talks.
- Maintain safe distances from underground and overhead services.
- Report any signs of ground movement, cracking, water ingress or potential collapse.