



Excavation Permitting Requirements

Purpose

Excavation and trenching work presents serious hazards, with cave-ins being the greatest risk. To prevent injuries and ensure compliance with OSHA 29 CFR 1926 Subpart P, a permit must be completed and approved before any ground is broken.

This week, we are focusing on excavation permitting: what it means, who is responsible, and why it is one of the most important steps before starting any digging operation.

1. Excavation Work Requires a Permit

No one should begin excavation without a completed Excavation Permit.

This includes:

- Any man-made **cut, cavity, trench, or depression formed by removing earth**
- Any excavation deeper than 4 feet
- Any work near underground utilities or structures

Permits are available online at: <https://iws.support/permits-electronic>

IWS Excavation Permit Form

The permit ensures that:

- Underground utilities are identified and marked
- Soil classification and protective systems are evaluated
- Safe access and egress (such as ladders or ramps) are planned
- Water control, traffic control, and barricades are addressed
- The site has been inspected by a Competent Person

2. The Competent Person

Every excavation site must have a designated Competent Person trained to identify and correct hazards. This role usually falls to the superintendent. They are responsible for:

- Completing and approving the excavation permit
- Performing soil testing and selecting protective systems
- Conducting daily visual inspections before each shift.
- Completing the online inspection for once a week, after storms, or when conditions change
- Stopping work if unsafe conditions are present

Only the Competent Person can authorize work to begin after verifying all conditions are safe.

3. Daily Inspection and Permit Retention

The permit and inspection form are accessible at all times at the superintendents email and at the HSE online document management system.

Daily visual inspections ensure continued safety and recognize if or when conditions change.

If a new hazard appears, such as cracks, water seepage, vibration, or changing soil, work must stop and the permit must be revalidated.

4. Common Causes of Permit Violations

- Beginning work without a permit
- Not performing utility locates
- Failing to provide safe access or egress
- Working in a trench deeper than 5 feet without a protection system in place
- Not updating the permit after changes in conditions

5. Remember

Permits are not just paperwork. They are life-saving controls.

Every excavation represents a potential cave-in hazard.

Following the permit process ensures that every hazard is identified, every system is in place, and every worker goes home safely.

Safety Reminder

Before digging, stop and ask:

“Has the permit been completed and approved?”

If not, do not start. Get your Competent Person (superintendent or site manager) involved immediately.