Excavations toolbox talk

Excavation and structures · about 5 minutes · read it out, or say it in your own words

SITE OR JOB	DATE	PRESENTER

Soil is heavy, and a trench wall can fall in with no warning and bury a worker before anyone can dig them out. Foundations, drains, soak-aways and service trenches on small jobs are often dug fast and left unsupported. Digging also finds buried electricity cables, water pipes and gas lines the hard way.

SAY THIS

Someone competent is in charge

All excavation work is supervised by a competent person appointed in writing. That person checks the ground before we dig, and inspects every excavation each day before the shift starts, after rain, after any fall of ground and after any damage to the supports. The results go in a register on site. If you do not know who that person is, ask today.

Never enter an unsupported trench

Nobody goes into a trench that has not been shored or braced, unless the sides have been cut back to a safe slope, or the competent person has given written permission because the ground is stable. Dry, hard-looking soil can still collapse. If you see cracks along the edge, a bulging wall, water seeping in or small bits of soil falling, get out straight away and report it.

Keep the edges clear

Do not put spoil, bricks, pipes or machines close to the edge, because their weight can push the wall in. Keep the TLB and trucks back from the edge unless the excavation is properly supported. When a truck tips into or near a trench, use a stop block so it cannot roll in.

A safe way in and out

Every trench where people work needs a safe way in and out, such as a ladder, and it must be no further than six metres from where anyone is working. Do not climb the shoring or jump in and out.

Find services before you dig

Before digging we find out where electricity, water, gas and other services run. Dig by hand near them. If you hit or uncover a cable or pipe you were not expecting, stop, step away, keep others back and tell the foreman. Do not touch it or try to pull it out.

Stop people falling in

Where the public can get near, or people could be hurt, the excavation gets a barrier or fence at least one metre high, as close to the edge as practicable, with lights or clear markers at night. Warning signs go up next to trenches where people are working. A deep or narrow excavation can collect fumes, so it may be treated as a confined space.

CHECK ON SITE TODAY

- [ ] Who is the appointed excavation supervisor, and is today's inspection in the register?
- [ ] Is every trench people work in shored, braced or cut back to a safe slope?
- [ ] Spoil, materials and machines kept back from the edges
- [ ] A ladder or other safe access within six metres of everyone in the trench
- [ ] Services marked, and hand digging where they run
- [ ] Barriers, warning signs and night lights in place where needed

ASK THE CREW

- ? What signs tell you a trench wall is about to go?
- ? What do you do if you uncover a cable or pipe nobody told you about?
- ? Where should the spoil from today's trench go?
- ? If someone was buried, what should we do and what should we not do?

PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT FOR THIS JOB

Hard hat · Safety boots · High-visibility vest when working near machines or traffic · Gloves for handling shoring and pipes

THE LAW

Construction Regulations, 2014, regulation 13(1) and 13(2)(a) to (e): Excavation; Construction Regulations, 2014, regulation 13(2)(f) to (l): Excavation; Construction Regulations, 2014, regulation 1: Definitions ("excavation work"). What each one says, in plain words, with links: sitediary.co.za/toolbox-talks/excavations/

Toolbox talk attendance register

TOPIC

Excavations and trenches

DATE

SITE OR JOB

TIME

PRESENTER

COMPANY

PRESENTER SIGNATURE

By signing, I confirm that I attended this toolbox talk, that it was given in a language I understand, and that I could ask questions.

NO.	NAME AND SURNAME	COMPANY OR TRADE	SIGNATURE
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Keep this register in the site health and safety file. Log the talk in today's site diary with a photo of this page.