

Toolbox Talk

Excavations



Most construction work will involve some form of excavation, which will always be considered a high risk activity.



Hazards associated with excavation include:

- Collapse of the sides, thorough lack of support, surcharge to the sides (overloading the ground next to the excavation by plant or materials), a change in ground conditions due to weather or ground vibrations from plant or equipment.
- Falls of materials, plant, equipment or persons into the excavation.
- Underground/overhead services.
- Contaminated ground.
- Confined spaces, lack of oxygen, toxic or explosive atmosphere, flooding.
- Undermining adjacent structures or services.

A cubic metre of soil can weigh over a tonne

Excavation safety:

- Before carrying out any excavation, check for underground services, use a Cable avoidance Tool scanner and signal generator.
- Always assume services are live until the utility supplier conforms otherwise.
- Materials for excavation supports should be available before the excavation starts.
- There must be suitable and sufficient access into and out of the excavation, usually ladder access.
- Physical barriers are required to prevent any person, vehicle, plant, equipment or materials from falling into the excavation.
- Spoil from the excavation should be placed away from the sides of the excavation at a distance at least equal to the final depth of the excavation.
- Do not allow plant to idle next to an excavation.
- Keep the excavation well ventilated to prevent the build up of suffocating, toxic or explosive atmosphere.
- Some excavations require a **Permit to Dig**.
- **Excavations must be inspected by a competent person prior to entry at the start of every shift.**