



EXCAVATION WORK

1. Most fatal accidents in excavation work occur in trenches less than 2.5m deep, often in ground conditions with no visible defects.
2. Despite appearances, however, the excavation of materials causes pressure relief, and introduces conditions which can lead to a collapse of the sides.
3. Rainwater or hot, dry weather increase the chance of such failures.
4. A relatively small collapse of the side of a trench could actually weigh more than a tonne, and a person buried by such a fall would be unable to breathe. The person would quickly suffocate and die.
5. Neither the shallowness of an excavation or the appearance of the ground should be taken as indications of safety.
6. Most excavations more than 1.2m deep require some sort of support for the sides. The type of support required will depend upon the type of excavation, the nature of the ground, ground water conditions, and to some extent, the weather.
7. No attempt must be made by any person to enter an excavation more than 1.2m deep unless the sides are properly supported – if in doubt, ask.
8. Safe means of access and egress must be provided, with ladders securely fixed.
9. Climbing the walings and struts of shoring is not permitted.
10. Excavations more than 2m deep must be provided with barriers to prevent persons falling into them.



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11. Where vehicles tip materials into an excavation, stop blocks must be used.
 12. In very deep excavations, the atmosphere must be tested before you enter – if in doubt, ask.
 13. When an excavator is used as a crane, that is fitted with slings to lift things in and out of an excavation, it must have a certificate permitting this. If in doubt, ask.
 14. When loads are being lifted in or out of an excavation, care must be taken to avoid damage to the struts or walings.
 15. Do not work within the slewing arc of an excavator.
 16. Do not jump across a trench, walk round or use a bridge.
 17. If hand digging or banking an excavator make sure that you know the location of all underground services before you start. If in doubt, ask.
 18. If you are required to work in excavation more than 1.2m deep, the sides of which are not supported, do not go in – report the matter to your supervisor.
 19. If the support to the sides of an excavation looks in any way loose/unsafe, do not go in – report the matter to your supervisor.
 20. If you should see signs of earth peeling or cracking at an unsupported face, warn people in the area and report it at once. Everyone must leave the excavation, and not re-enter until safe to do so.



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21. If you should see water or soil seeping through support work, warn people in the area, and report it at once. Everyone must leave the excavation, and not re-enter until safe to do so.

 22. Remember, if you should be in an excavation when there is a collapse of the sides, the odds are against you coming out alive. Never take chances, the risks are too great.