

Permit to dig

It is essential that permits are completed correctly and contain all of the necessary information to control the work. A permit system details the precautions that must be taken, what has been done and what is required. It enables the person in charge to check that all of the conditions have been met before work commences.



First section of the permit – project details

The first section of a permit should be completed by the project or works manager, and contain relevant project details such as the:

- name of the contractor
- date and time of the permit
- name of the supervisor
- name of the workers.

It should have a brief description of the works to be completed.

Second section of the permit – precautions to take before work starts

This contains examples of precautions to be taken before the work starts, which should be completed by the supervisor in charge of the works. Following the list, there should be a section where the contractor's supervisor and the workers can sign the permit, to demonstrate that they have been briefed on the safe method of work, and that they understand and will comply with precautions listed.

- Contract drawings and details must be issued by the client or otherwise obtained.
- Drawings must show the location, type and status of underground services.
- Live services must be made dead as far as possible or necessary.
- The work area must be surveyed by a competent person, using appropriate detection equipment to confirm the exact location of underground services.
- The location of services must be marked on the ground.
- There must be a valid method statement and risk assessment in place.
- The method statement and risk assessment must be explained to the operatives carrying out the work.
- The person in charge of the excavation must be fully conversant with the principles of safe digging, and/or avoidance of underground services.
- All operatives must be familiar with safe excavation practices.
- If plant is being used, the operator must be competent and familiar with safe excavation practices.
- The type, serial number and calibration test date of cable avoidance equipment used must be recorded.

Third section of the permit – following completion of the work

The supervisor in charge of the works must ensure that they are satisfied that:

- the excavation has been backfilled and the surface re-instated
- the work is completed, and the area has been left in a safe condition
- the work area is clear of operatives and all equipment
- the utility company (or companies) has (have) been informed that services made dead may now be reactivated.

They must then:

- sign off the permit, to acknowledge what has or has not been completed
- record on the permit the details of any additional work that is necessary before the permit can be cancelled
- ensure that the relevant section of the permit is completed.

Fourth section of the permit – cancellation

This is the cancellation of the permit, which must be completed by the supervisor in charge of the works to demonstrate that they are satisfied that all work has been completed, and that the permit is now cancelled.

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