

Excavation and Trenching Policy

The purpose of the Excavation and Trenching Policy is to protect employees from hazards associated with excavating and trenching, and to ensure compliance with New Hampshire Department of Labor Standard 1403.19 Excavating and Trenching.

A. Employers Responsibilities

The Employer shall contact “Dig Safe” seventy-two hours before excavation begins, to determine if there are underground utility installations in that area. He/She shall also ensure that underground utilities are identified and marked prior to excavation, and supply employees with trench protective systems when necessary. The employer must follow the applicable procedures identified in section 3 of this policy.

B. Employee Responsibilities

The supervisor shall inspect and evaluate the condition of all trenches and excavations prior to permitting employees to enter. He/She must also perform inspection at the beginning of each day and at least 3 to 4 times during the workday, pay attention to weather conditions that may affect the conditions of the trench or excavation, and only continue trenching or excavation operations once the conditions have been made safe according to the guidelines identified in section 3 of this policy.

C. Procedural Overview

Before an Excavation or Trenching Operation, the employer must contact “Dig Safe” to determine if there are any underground utility installations in that area and identify and mark underground utility installations. The supervisor shall inspect and evaluate the condition of all trenches or excavations prior to permitting employees to enter.

During Excavation or Trenching Operations, the supervisor must inspect and evaluate the trench or excavation 3 to 4 times during the workday. The workers must use a trench protective system (e.g. trench box) or sloping of the ground to the appropriate angle of repose when walls and faces of trenches and excavations are five or more feet deep, or when, regardless of depth, there is a danger of cave in or moving ground. If evidence of possible cave-in or sliding is apparent, all work in the excavation shall cease until the requirement of number two above have been met to safeguard the employees. Trenches four or more feet deep must have adequate means of exit such as ladders or steps, located to require no more than 25 feet of lateral travel. When employees are required to enter a trench or excavation, excavated or other material shall be stored and retained at least two or more feet from the edge of the excavation. Excavations near retaining walls, utility poles, and other objects that are supported by compacted soil shall be supported at all times to prevent their collapse or undermining.

D. Personal Protective Equipment

Personal Protective Equipment required for this operation includes hardhats, safety footwear, and gloves.

From the Town of Amherst's Policy and Procedure Manual, 2009.