

PERMIT · UNITED KINGDOM · 2026

Excavation Permit

UK excavation permit template and structure — HSG47 services check, CAT scans, daily inspections, support and stability.

An excavation permit authorises a specific excavation in a specific location for a specific time window, recording the underground services survey, the chosen excavation method, the support / battering design, and the daily inspection regime. It is required by every UK principal contractor working under CDM 2015 and is the practical mechanism for discharging the HSG47 'Avoiding danger from underground services' duty.

Document structure a reviewer expects

- 1. Permit number, date, location**
Sequential number, exact location (grid reference / drawing reference), proposed depth and dimensions.
- 2. Service survey (HSG47)**
Utility plans obtained (list owners), CAT and Genny survey with operator, equipment serial, calibration date, scan pattern recorded.
- 3. Excavation method**
Mechanical, hand-dig zones, vacuum excavation areas — with proximity rules to known services.
- 4. Support and stability design**
Trench box / sheet pile / battering — design reference and temporary works designer sign-off for deep excavations.
- 5. Spoil, edge protection and access**
Spoil setback $\geq 1\text{m}$, edge guardrails / barriers, ladder access within 7.5m travel, extending 1m above edge.
- 6. Plant proximity**
No plant within 1m of edge unless designed for it; banksman arrangements.
- 7. Atmospheric / confined space check**
Where excavation may meet Confined Spaces Regs 1997 criteria, atmospheric testing regime and reference to confined space permit.
- 8. Daily inspection (reg 22(2))**
Competent person named, inspection register reference (Form 91 Part 1A), expiry / re-issue schedule.
- 9. Sign-off and cancellation**
Issuer signature, operative briefing, permit cancellation when excavation backfilled or area handed back.

Common reasons reviewers reject this document

- CAT scan recorded without operator name, equipment serial or calibration date.
- No reference to LinesearchBeforeUDig or equivalent utility plan request.
- Excavation over 1.2 m with no support design or battering reference.
- Excavations over 4 m with no temporary works designer (TWD) sign-off.

- Spoil setback not stated, or visibly less than 1 m on photographs.
- Daily inspection regime not named — permit treated as one-shot, doesn't satisfy CDM reg 22(2).
- Hand-dig proximity zone (within 500 mm of known service) not marked on the plan.

UK regulation reference

CDM 2015 regulation 22 — Excavations SI 2015/51 reg 22

The statutory duty to prevent collapse and to inspect — the core regulation the permit operates under.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/51/regulation/22/made>

HSG47 — Avoiding danger from underground services HSE HSG47

The reference document for service surveys, CAT / Genny use and proximity rules.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg47.htm>

HSG185 — Health and safety in excavations HSE HSG185

Standard reference for excavation support, access and inspection.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg185.htm>

Confined Spaces Regulations 1997 SI 1997/1713

Applies where the excavation meets the regulation 1(2) test (specified atmospheric risk).

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1997/1713/contents/made>

Frequently asked questions

Is an excavation permit a legal requirement?

Not directly named in statute, but it is the standard mechanism for discharging the CDM 2015 regulation 22 duties to plan, support and inspect excavations and the HSG47 duty to avoid services. Every UK principal contractor operating under CDM 2015 will require one.

How deep can I dig without support?

There is no fixed depth in statute, but in practice excavations over 1.2 m are presumed to require support unless battered to the angle of repose for the soil class by a competent person. HSE prosecutions under CDM reg 22 frequently involve unsupported excavations between 1.2 and 2 m where 'we were only in for a minute' was the operative's defence.

What does a CAT and Genny survey actually need to record?

Operator name, equipment make / model and serial number, calibration date (within manufacturer's interval), the modes used (power, radio, generator), the scan pattern (parallel passes at ≤ 250 mm spacing, repeated perpendicular to the first pass), and any anomalies detected with their location marked on a sketch or plan.

Does a permit-to-dig replace the HSG47 service plans?

No. The plans are a precondition to the permit. The permit records that plans were obtained from every utility owner (via LinesearchBeforeUDig in most UK locations) and confirms the on-site survey reconciled with the plans. Permits issued without the plan-request audit trail are routinely rejected.

How often does the permit need to be re-issued?

Most principal contractors require daily re-issue, paired with the regulation 22(2) shift inspection. This is because excavation stability can change overnight (rain, frost, vibration from adjacent plant) and the shift inspection is the regulatory mechanism for verifying continued safety.

Need a finished version of this document?

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