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WORKED EXAMPLE: METHOD STATEMENT

Digging a 1.2 m trench for strip footings and a drain

Hollins & Reed Groundworks Ltd · 12 to 16 October 2026 · In charge: Dan Hollins

Worked example of a method statement. Change it to fit your job before you use it.

Job details

Company	Hollins & Reed Groundworks Ltd
Site and work area	4 Bridge Road, M20
Planned dates	12 to 16 October 2026
Customer	Mr and Mrs Lowe
In charge on site	Dan Hollins
Team	Three operatives: Dan Hollins leads and inspects the trench; Tom Ellis drives the excavator; Priya Shah is marshaller and holds the locator ticket.
Work	Digging a 1.2 m trench for strip footings and a drain
Risk assessment	Digging a 1.2 m trench for strip footings and a drain: worked example RAMS, a separate document
Prepared by	Dan Hollins
Signature	
Date	

Work and boundaries

Locate services, shallow excavate, backfill/compact. Areas: Side and rear of the house, trench 1.2 m deep and 14 m long

Not our work:

- Pouring the footings and laying and testing the drain, which have their own method statements.

Working arrangement

- Access: the floor or ground.
- Excavation support: Trench sheets and props to a design.

- Other people will be using the area.
- The family stays at home; the side path is closed. Services are on plans, scanned with a CAT and genny, and marked before digging; trial holes by hand near them. No depth is safe unsupported: trench sheets and props go in before anyone enters, and nobody enters to set them without protection. Spoil stays back from the edge. The trench is more than 3 m from next door's foundations and too shallow to meet the 6 m rule, so no party wall notice is needed. A ladder tied 1 m above the top. No plant near the sides. Quick hitch pin checked before the bucket goes on, nobody within the slew.

Emergency arrangements

Trench collapse: stop plant. Nobody goes in to dig by hand. Priya Shah rings 999, says "trench collapse, 1.2 m deep", gives 4 Bridge Road, M20, and meets the crew at the front; if she is the one hurt, Dan Hollins does it. Dan Hollins keeps everyone clear. Gas strike: everyone out, no ignition sources within 5 m, ring 0800 111 999. Cable hit: the driver stays in the cab, everyone clear, ring the network operator on the number on the site board. Trench flooding: everyone out. Sewer breach: wash, cover cuts, tell the householder. Excavator overturns: the driver stays in the cab, belted. First aider: Priya Shah, kit in the van.

Planned method

1. **Set up the work area**
   Confirm the work area and scope before starting. Keep other people outside the active work area. Keep entrances and escape routes clear.

2. **Keep people clear of the work**
   Agree how people get past or around the work while it is going on. Put barriers or signs where a route crosses the work. Do not leave open work unattended.

3. **Get the service information first**
   Ask each owner for the current plan and status of services in the work area. Keep the plans and site records with the RAMS.

4. **Give building control its notice**
   Give notice 2 days before the work starts, and 1 day before footings or drains are covered. Call building control to see the ground before any concrete goes in.

5. **Find and isolate hidden services**
   Find buried cables and pipes before anyone digs: plans first, then a locator. Plans only show roughly where things are. Mark what you find. Not sure what is there? Do not dig.

6. **Carry the trench sheets, props and tools safely**
   Plan the route, clear it, and get help with anything long or heavy. Store materials close to the work so nobody carries further than they need to.

7. **Keep spoil and plant off the edge**
   Put spoil, materials and plant where their weight will not load the excavation edge. Keep the route beside the dig clear.

8 **Separate people from the excavator**
Barrier the excavator's working area and agree the pedestrian route. Use a trained operator and a marshaller where the method needs one.

9 **Watch for asbestos in the ground**
Old fill and demolition ground can hold asbestos cement sheet, fragments and old pipes. Ask for the site ground report or asbestos survey before you break ground. If you turn up cement sheet, rope lagging or anything you do not recognise, stop and cover it over.

10 **Control changes in the ground**
Deal with water, made ground, nearby structures and traffic in the temporary works plan. Stop if the ground moves, water rises or a nearby structure is affected.

11 **Use a trained locator**
Use a locator only with the training and equipment instructions that apply to it. Check the signal generator and locator before the survey starts.

12 **Survey and mark the whole area**
Sweep the whole work area and record the route of each indication. Mark the findings where the people who dig will see them.

13 **Treat missing readings as unknown**
Do not call the ground clear because the locator found nothing. Flag plastic pipes and other services the equipment may not detect.

14 **Hand over marks and records**
Show the dig team the marks, plans and places that were not scanned. Record any mismatch before the next team starts digging.

15 **Set out the dig against service marks**
Check the excavation line against the plans and marks before breaking the surface. Stop if the service information and the ground do not agree.

16 **Dig to the marks, by hand near services**
Dig trial holes by hand near services, with a safe digging method and the locator operator. Set spoil back from the edge and keep plant away from the sides. Nobody goes in until the sides are safe.

17 **Barrier the open excavation**
Put a substantial barrier around edges where people could fall. Keep it in place when the team leaves the excavation.

18 **Use the support named in this document**
Use the excavation support named in this document. Nobody goes in until it is in, or to set it without protection. Do not change the support arrangement because the ground looks firm.

19 **Inspect the excavation before work**
Have a competent person inspect the excavation and support at the start of each shift. Inspect again after rain, frost or anything that could affect stability. Where supports or battering are used, write the report within 24 hours.

20 Provide safe access before anyone goes in

Provide the access and escape arrangement set for this excavation before entry. Keep engines and spoil away from the people inside.

21 Get the excavation released

Check the inspection, any building control visit and any record the work needs before anything goes back in. Stop if a defect or missing record remains.

22 Keep the plate off unprotected services

Do not use a plate until the specified protective cover is in place. Use hand tools where the owner's detail requires them.

23 Assess vibration from the plate compactor

Note how long each person's hands are on each tool while it runs. Take the tool's vibration figure from the maker or HSE's table and check it fits how you use it. Points per hour times hours on the trigger, added up for the day, gives the exposure: 100 points is the action value, 400 is the limit. HSE's vibration calculator does the sum. Over 100, cut it with lower-vibration kit or less time, and never pass 400. Write the result down. Sharing the work does not replace this.

24 Keep dirty water and silt out of drains

Keep spoil and wash water away from drains and watercourses. Use the site's agreed controls for pumping, silt and contaminated water.

25 Bed and cover services by hand

Use the owner's bedding and cover detail around exposed pipes, ducts or cables. Keep hard or sharp fill away from the service, and put warning tape and tiles back above it.

26 Take the support out in the planned order

Take out the props and sheets in the planned order as the fill comes up. Nobody goes back in where the support has come out.

27 Compact each specified layer

Place the specified fill in the layers the job detail sets. Compact each layer to the required acceptance before adding the next.

28 Clear and hand back the area

Remove tools, waste and unused materials. Check the area is clean and ready to use. Tell the customer or whoever runs the site when the work is complete.