ComplyOnSite
complyonsite.com

WORKED EXAMPLE: RISK ASSESSMENT AND 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. 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 |
| **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.

## Risk assessment

| Hazard | Who might be harmed and how | Controls in place |
|---|---|---|
| People entering the work area or tripping over materials<br>Step 1 | Workers, occupants and visitors | Mark or barrier the active work area. Store tools and materials away from access routes. |

| Hazard | Who might be harmed and how | Controls in place |
|---|---|---|
| People using the building or passing by walking into the work or over what it leaves<br>Step 2 | Occupants, visitors, members of the public and workers | Keep the barriers and signs up while the work is active. Give people a clear way round where their normal route is blocked. |
| Striking an unrecorded cable, gas pipe or water main<br>Step 3 | The locating team and the people who dig next | Contact the service owners before intrusive work. Treat missing records as an unresolved risk. |
| Work is covered up before it has been seen and has to be opened again<br>Step 4 | The dig team and the client | Record who was told and when. |
| Hitting a buried cable or gas pipe causes shock, burns or a gas escape<br>Step 5 | The person doing the work and everyone nearby | If a cable is struck, the driver stays in the cab. If gas is struck, get everyone away, put out ignition sources within 5 m and ring 0800 111 999. |
| Back and shoulder injury from carrying heavy or long items<br>Step 6 | Everyone handling materials | Use a trolley or sack truck on the flat where the load suits one. |
| The excavation side collapsing under spoil, plant or vehicle loading<br>Step 7 | The dig team, drivers and people near the excavation | Set a clear edge exclusion area. Do not park or tip close to the sides. |
| A moving excavator striking or trapping a person<br>Step 8 | The operator, dig team and people passing | Keep pedestrians out of the operating area. Stop the machine before anyone enters its working area. |
| Breathing asbestos fibres from buried sheet, pipes or old fill<br>Step 9 | The dig team and anyone downwind | Do not move or break suspect material; get it checked first. Licensed work is not for this method; hand it to a licensed contractor. |
| Ground movement, flooding or a nearby structure being undermined<br>Step 10 | The dig team, nearby workers and the public | Keep pumps, traffic and plant within the assessed arrangement. Recheck the excavation after a change in conditions. |

| Hazard | Who might be harmed and how | Controls in place |
|---|---|---|
| Relying on a reading the operator cannot interpret or the equipment cannot give<br>Step 11 | The locator operator and the dig team | Use a competent, trained operator. Follow the equipment maker's instructions and record limitations. |
| A service route being missed, misread or not passed to the digging team<br>Step 12 | The locating team and anyone working near the marks | Survey before the work is planned and set out. Record areas that could not be scanned. |
| Digging into a non-metallic or poorly detected service<br>Step 13 | The locating team and the people who dig next | Compare readings with plans and site records. Use hand exposure where the planned work is near an assumed service. |
| A later worker digging to marks without knowing their limits or changes<br>Step 14 | The locating team and whoever digs afterwards | Keep the survey record on site. Re-mark anything that has been lost or damaged. |
| Striking a buried service while starting the excavation<br>Step 15 | The dig team and people nearby | Use the service records and survey marks together. Keep the work stopped while an unexpected service is identified. |
| Plant strikes a service, or the dig undermines a wall, scaffold or footing<br>Step 16 | The dig team and anyone nearby | Check the quick hitch pin is in before the bucket moves. Check the dig against nearby walls and scaffold before it starts. |
| A person falling into the open excavation<br>Step 17 | The dig team, other trades and people passing | Check the barrier after work or weather changes. Do not leave an open excavation unprotected. |
| The excavation sides collapsing and burying someone<br>Step 18 | Anyone working in or near the excavation | Have the support arrangement managed by a competent person. Stop if the ground or excavation is not as assessed. |
| Burial or injury in an excavation that has moved since the last check<br>Step 19 | Anyone working in or near the excavation | Record the inspection and correct faults before work resumes. Keep people out while a defect remains. |

| Hazard | Who might be harmed and how | Controls in place |
|---|---|---|
| A person is trapped, struck or cannot escape from the excavation Step 20 | Anyone entering the excavation | Keep access clear at all times. Do not allow entry while support, inspection or access is incomplete. |
| Burying faulty work or losing the evidence needed to repair it Step 21 | The backfill team and the service owner | Use this job's release arrangement. Keep the inspection record with the RAMS. |
| Vibration or impact damaging a shallow gas pipe or other service Step 22 | The compactor operator and the service owner | Follow the service owner's cover and compaction sequence. Stop if the required cover is not confirmed. |
| Hand-arm vibration from the plate compactor Step 23 | The compactor operator | Keep the tools maintained and hands warm. Gloves do not stop vibration. Give health checks to anyone above the action value. |
| Silt or contaminated water polluting a drain or watercourse Step 24 | The backfill team, the public and the environment | Stop pumping if the discharge route is not controlled. Report a spill or unexpected contamination at once. |
| Crushing, pulling or damaging a service while fill is placed Step 25 | The backfill team and the service owner | Use the specified material and sequence. Stop and report damage before covering it. |
| The sides collapse as the support is drawn, burying someone Step 26 | Anyone working in or near the excavation | Do not pull a sheet or prop ahead of the fill. Stop if the ground moves. |
| Settlement, voids or later failure from poorly compacted fill Step 27 | The backfill team and people using the finished ground | Follow the actual fill specification. Record tests or acceptance as the job requires. |
| Debris, tools or unfinished work left in the area Step 28 | Workers, occupants and visitors | Remove waste by the agreed route. Record and protect any unfinished work. |