

Irrigation Trenching & Utility Awareness

TRADE: LANDSCAPING & GROUNDS

LEADER GUIDE: 8-12 MINUTES

USE WHAT FITS TODAY

LEADER NOTE

Do not read this sheet word-for-word. Pick the sections that match today's task, point to the actual equipment/work area, and get the crew to answer the questions out loud.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Use this leader guide before irrigation trenching & utility awareness work to review the real setup, the controls that need to be in place, and the conditions that should stop the task. Excavation conditions can change between one trip into the trench and the next. Soil, water, vibration, nearby loads and utilities all affect whether the protective system and access are still suitable. A competent-person inspection is a control, not a formality.

A SCENARIO TO DISCUSS

The excavation was acceptable at the morning inspection, then Irrigation Trenching & Utility Awareness continues after rain, vibration, new spoil placement, water seepage, or nearby equipment changes the condition. What must the competent person re-evaluate before workers enter or remain in the excavation?

BEFORE WORK STARTS

- Confirm the competent-person inspection is current and review soil, water, adjacent loads and protective system.
- Verify utilities are located/marked and conflicts are resolved before digging or entering.
- Confirm safe access/egress and keep spoil, equipment and materials controlled near the edge.
- Call for utility locating and use the required tolerance-zone/exposure method before trenching.
- Keep trenching equipment, spoils and workers separated and watch for shallow private utilities not shown by public marks.

SAFE WORK SEQUENCE / CONTROLS

- Call for utility locating and use the required tolerance-zone/exposure method before trenching.
- Keep trenching equipment, spoils and workers separated and watch for shallow private utilities not shown by public marks.
- Provide safe access and evaluate protective-system needs as trench depth and soil conditions change.
- Stop when an unmarked line, unusual soil, conduit, root conflict or water condition is encountered.

QUESTIONS THAT SHOULD CHANGE THE JOB

1. What did the competent person find in the latest inspection, and has anything changed since that inspection?
2. What protective system is being used, and does the actual depth, soil, water, and adjacent loading still match the plan?
3. Where is safe access/egress, and can every worker reach it without crossing an uncontrolled hazard?

COMMON FAILURE POINTS

- Entering after conditions changed without a new competent-person evaluation.
- Allowing spoil, equipment, water or vibration to load or destabilize the excavation.
- Treating utility marks or old drawings as a substitute for field verification.

STOP AND RESET IF...

- The competent-person inspection has not been completed or conditions have changed since the inspection.
- Water, cracking, sloughing, vibration, adjacent loads or utility conflicts appear.
- Required protective systems, safe access/egress or edge controls are not in place.

4. What sign of cracking, sloughing, water, vibration, utility conflict, or equipment surcharge means everyone gets out?
5. What must the competent person re-evaluate before workers enter or remain in the excavation?

MAKE IT REAL ON THE JOB

Walk the edge with the competent person and point out protective system, access and changing conditions.

BEFORE YOU RELEASE THE CREW

Before the crew starts, everyone should be able to explain the hazard, point to the control being used today, and name the condition that would make the work stop.

ATTENDANCE & SIGN-OFF

Irrigation Trenching & Utility Awareness

Project / Job:		Date:	
Talk leader:		Location:	

CREW ACKNOWLEDGMENT

By signing, attendees confirm they participated in this toolbox talk and had the opportunity to raise job-specific questions. Signatures do not replace required training, qualifications, permits or certifications.

#	Name	Company / Trade	Signature
1			
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QUESTIONS / CONDITIONS / CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

END-OF-TALK CHECK

☐ Crew can point to the main hazard.	☐ Critical control is in place and usable.
☐ The responsible person/check is clear.	☐ Stop/re-brief conditions were discussed.