

EXCAVATIONS AND TRENCH EDGES

Illustrative training scenario - not an actual IPS incident

1 BACKGROUND

Trenches may collapse or fill with water. People, spoil and vehicles can fall in or overload an edge.

2 SCENARIO

Training example: after heavy rain, a worker prepares to enter a trench with damaged support and spoil stored close to the edge.

3 IMMEDIATE RISK

Collapse can bury or crush a person. Keep people out, isolate the area and report the unsafe condition.

4 CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS

Changed ground conditions were not reassessed. Edge loading increased and the support arrangement was not checked.

5 KEY CONTROLS

Plan suitable support or battering before digging. Identify services and protect nearby structures. Provide safe access, edge barriers and controls for water. Keep plant and spoil away from edges as determined by the assessment.

6 SUPERVISOR CHECK

A competent person must inspect supports or battering at the start of the shift and after events affecting stability. Record required inspections. Rectify defects before work. No unplanned entry or improvised rescue into an unsafe trench.

STOP • CHECK • ACT

**No entry until the
excavation is safe.**

Briefing aid: apply the project risk assessment, method statement and manufacturer instructions.

HSE guidance: [construction/safetytopics/excavations.htm](https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/safetytopics/excavations.htm)