

City of Wellston

Trenching & Excavation Safety Policy

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Approved by: David Walton (Service Director)

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1. Purpose

This policy establishes minimum requirements and procedures to prevent injuries, fatalities, and property damage during trenching and excavation activities conducted by the City of Wellston. It provides guidance for planning, protective systems, inspections, training, and emergency response in compliance with applicable OSHA standards.

2. Scope & Applicability

This policy applies to all City of Wellston departments and employees who plan, supervise, inspect, or perform excavation or trenching work, including but not limited to the Water, Sewer, Street, and Water Distribution/Infrastructure divisions; contractors working on behalf of the City must meet or exceed these requirements.

3. References

Primary regulatory references include, without limitation:

- OSHA 29 CFR 1926 Subpart P – Excavations (1926.650–1926.652)
- OSHA 29 CFR 1926 Subpart AA – Confined Spaces in Construction (1926.1200 series), as applicable
- OSHA 29 CFR 1910.146 – Permit-Required Confined Spaces (when general industry rules apply)
- State One-Call (811) utility locating requirements

4. Definitions

Excavation: Any man-made cut, cavity, trench, or depression in the earth's surface formed by earth removal.

Trench: A narrow excavation below the surface of the ground in which the depth is greater than the width and the width does not exceed 15 feet.

Protective System: A method of protecting employees from cave-ins, material that could fall from excavations, or collapse of adjacent structures (e.g., sloping, benching, shoring, shielding/trench boxes).

Competent Person: An individual capable of identifying existing and predictable hazards in the surroundings or working conditions and who has the authorization to take prompt corrective measures to eliminate them.

Hazardous Atmosphere: An atmosphere that may expose employees to the risk of death, incapacitation, impairment, or acute illness due to oxygen deficiency, flammability, or toxicity.

Spoil/Surcharge Load: Soil, materials, or equipment placed near the edge of the excavation that may impose additional loads on the sidewalls.

Water Accumulation: Seepage, standing water, or inflow that increases cave-in risk or creates drowning/electrical hazards.

Access/Egress: Safe means of entering and exiting excavations, such as ladders, steps, ramps, or runways.

5. Roles & Responsibilities

Service Director / Department Heads

- Ensure resources, training, and equipment are provided to implement this policy.
- Designate competent person(s) in writing for each department.
- Verify contractors meet City and OSHA requirements.

Human Resources (HR)

- Schedule training and maintain training records for all employees.
- Maintain copies of competent person designations and inspection records at 203 E Broadway St.
- Coordinate annual policy review and distribution of updates.

Competent Person

- Conduct soil classifications and select appropriate protective systems.
- Perform and document required inspections (daily and as conditions change).
- Verify access/egress, spoil placement, utilities locating, and atmospheric monitoring as needed.
- Stop work when hazards are observed and ensure corrective actions are taken.

Employees

- Follow this policy and instructions from the competent person.
- Use required PPE and maintain situational awareness.
- Report hazards immediately and exercise stop-work authority if unsafe conditions exist.

6. Training Requirements

The City will provide training commensurate with duties and hazards. Training content and frequency shall meet or exceed OSHA requirements and this policy.

6.1 Trenching & Excavation – Competent Person Training

- Required for employees who supervise, plan, inspect, or direct excavation work.
- Covers soil classification, protective systems (sloping, benching, shoring, shielding), hazard recognition, inspections, and emergency procedures.

- Designation as a competent person is made in writing by the department head after training and field evaluation.

6.2 General Employee Training

- Required for all employees who work in or around excavations.
- Covers basic hazards, safe entry/exit, spoil placement, equipment awareness, and emergency actions.

6.3 Confined Space Training

- Provided to employees who may enter or oversee work in manholes, vaults, tanks, or other confined spaces.
- Includes atmospheric testing, ventilation, permit procedures, PPE, LOTO, and rescue coordination per OSHA 1910.146 or 1926 Subpart AA, as applicable.

6.4 Annual Training & Review

- The City of Wellston will schedule annual training with all employees to review the Excavation and Trenching Policy, discuss any updates or changes, and promote best practices in the workplace.
- Refresher or interim training will be conducted when standards change, new equipment/methods are introduced, or deficiencies are observed.

6.5 Records

- HR maintains training records and certificates for each employee.
- Departments submit attendance rosters and any vendor-provided certificates to HR on the same day training is completed.

7. Planning & Pre-Excavation Procedures

- Call 811 and coordinate utility locating in accordance with state One-Call timelines before digging; verify and mark all known utilities.
- Perform a Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) covering scope, location, traffic control, weather, equipment, and emergency access.
- Determine soil conditions using visual and manual tests by the competent person.
- Select and stage protective systems and access/egress equipment before excavation begins.
- Establish site controls: barricades, signage, traffic control, and exclusion zones.
- Coordinate with property owners, utility owners, and emergency services as needed.

8. Site Controls & Safe Work Practices

8.1 Soil Classification & Protective Systems

- Classify soil as Type A, B, or C (Type C is least stable).

- Provide a protective system for trenches 5 feet (1.5 m) or deeper, or when a competent person determines a cave-in hazard exists at lesser depths.
- Acceptable systems include sloping, benching, shoring, and shielding (trench boxes) per OSHA.

8.2 Access & Egress

- Provide ladders, steps, ramps, or other safe egress in trenches 4 feet (1.2 m) or deeper; spacing not to exceed 25 feet of lateral travel.
- Ladders must extend at least 3 feet above the trench edge and be secured.

8.3 Spoil Placement & Surcharges

- Keep excavated materials, tools, and equipment at least 2 feet from the trench edge or use retaining devices.
- Do not operate heavy equipment near edges unless the competent person verifies stability.

8.4 Hazardous Atmospheres & Ventilation

- Test atmospheres when the excavation is 4 feet or deeper and where oxygen deficiency, flammables, or toxics may be present (e.g., near utilities, landfills, or confined spaces).
- Provide ventilation and continuous monitoring when required; evacuate upon alarm or unsafe readings.

8.5 Water Accumulation & Stability

- Prevent and control water accumulation by pumps, diversion, or well points as determined by the competent person.
- Employees shall not work in excavations with standing water unless protective measures are in place and stability is verified.

8.6 Mobile Equipment & Traffic Control

- Use spotters and ensure clear communication when operating loaders, backhoes, or trucks near excavations.
- Provide barricades, cones, signs, and flagging per the traffic control plan when work affects roadways or pedestrian areas.

8.7 Walkways, Guarding & Fall Protection

- Provide walkways/bridges with standard guardrails when employees or equipment must cross excavations 6 feet or deeper.
- Guard or barricade open excavations to prevent falls from the public and other workers.

8.8 Adjacent Structures & Stability

- Support, underpin, or otherwise protect adjacent structures, sidewalks, poles, or pavements where excavation could undermine stability.

8.9 Housekeeping & PPE

- Maintain clear access around the excavation; remove loose materials from edges.
- Minimum PPE: hard hat, high-visibility apparel, safety footwear, gloves; add eye/hearing protection, respiratory protection, and gas monitors as required.

9. Inspections

- A competent person shall inspect excavations, adjacent areas, and protective systems daily before work begins and as needed throughout the shift.
- Additional inspections are required after rainstorms, thaw/freeze, vibrations, or any event likely to increase hazards.
- Document inspections using the Daily Excavation Inspection Checklist (Appendix B) and retain records with the project file and HR.

10. Confined Space Interface

Excavations that connect to, expose, or require entry into manholes, vaults, tanks, or pipelines shall comply with the City's Confined Space Program. When both excavation and confined space hazards are present, the more protective requirements shall apply, including permits, atmospheric monitoring, ventilation, attendant, and rescue coordination.

11. Emergency Response & Stop-Work Authority

- In the event of a cave-in or collapse: stop work, secure the area, call 911, and do not attempt entry without ensuring scene safety and coordination with emergency responders.
- Maintain current site maps and utility contacts for rapid communication.
- All employees have the authority and responsibility to stop work when unsafe conditions exist; no retaliation will occur for good-faith work stoppage.

12. Enforcement

Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including removal from the worksite and further corrective action per City policy. Contractors in violation may be subject to removal and contractual remedies.

13. Records & Documentation

- Training rosters and certificates (maintained by HR).
- Competent person designations (maintained by HR and departments).
- Daily Excavation Inspection Checklists and JHAs (retained with project files; copies to HR).
- Utility locate tickets and as-built drawings (retained with project files).

14. Annual Policy Review

The City of Wellston will conduct a formal annual review of this policy to incorporate regulatory updates, lessons learned, incident/near-miss trends, and equipment changes. Revisions will be approved by the Service Director and distributed to all departments; HR will maintain the master record.

Appendix A – Pre-Excavation Planning Checklist

- 811 utility locate requested/confirmed; marks verified on site.
- Plans, permits, traffic control, and notifications completed.
- Competent person assigned for the job.
- Soil conditions reviewed; protective system selected and available.
- Access/egress and ladders staged; spoil placement plan established.
- Atmospheric monitoring plan (if applicable).
- Water control plan (pumps/diversions) established.
- Barricades/signage/exclusion zones set.
- Emergency response plan reviewed; nearest hospital identified.
- PPE and equipment inspected and serviceable.

Appendix B – Daily Excavation Inspection Checklist

- Soil condition verified; no signs of raveling, cracks, or tension cracks.
- Protective system installed correctly and free of damage/defects.
- Ladders within 25 feet; extend 3 feet; secured.
- Spoils and equipment at least 2 feet from edge; edge protection adequate.
- No water accumulation or undermining; pumps functioning as required.
- Atmospheric testing conducted where required; readings acceptable.
- Mobile equipment controlled; spotters/traffic plan in place.
- Adjacent structures supported as needed; utilities located and exposed safely.
- Weather monitored; work halted during lightning/severe conditions.
- Housekeeping acceptable; signage/barricades maintained.

Appendix C – Competent Person Designation Form

Department: _____

Employee Name: _____ Title: _____

Training Completed (Course/Provider/Date): _____

Field Evaluation Completed (Date/By Whom): _____

Designated as Competent Person for: _____

Signature  Date 1-19-26