

Guarding Requirements for Trenches and Excavations – Know The Laws Of Your Province



Keeping workers and others from falling into an excavation.

OHS laws require employers to take measures to ensure that excavation and trenching operations are carried out in a way that endangers neither the workers inside nor the persons near the edge who are at risk of falling into the opening. Here's a look at the excavation guarding rules of each jurisdiction.

Excavation Guarding Rules Across Canada

FEDERAL

A highly visible barricade must be installed around an excavation or trench that poses a hazard to employees (*COHS Regs.*, Sec. 3.12(2))

ALBERTA

If there's a danger of a worker or equipment falling into an excavation, employer must ensure that workers are made aware of the excavation via flagging, marking, safeguards or other appropriate and effective means. (*OHS Code*, Sec. 444)

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Excavation that poses a hazard to workers must be effectively covered or guarded (*OHS Reg.*, Sec. 20.88)

MANITOBA

(a) When excavation work is carried out adjacent to an area where the public or a worker who isn't usually engaged in the work may pass, employer must ensure that excavation is adequately guarded by a fence, guardrail or covering sufficient to prevent a person from falling into it; (b) If there's a danger of

a worker falling into an excavation that's more than 3 m deep, employer must ensure it's adequately guarded by a fence, guardrail or covering sufficient to prevent a worker from falling into it; and (c) If an excavation poses a hazard to traffic because it's located close to a roadway, employer must ensure that reflective traffic control devices are installed around the excavation (*WSH Reg.*, Sec. 26.12)

NEW BRUNSWICK

Employer must ensure that an adequate barrier is set up around the excavation or trench so as to protect employees working in the excavation or trench from vehicular traffic (*OHS Gen. Reg.*, Sec. 188(2))

NEWFOUNDLAND

Excavations must be guarded by effective railings or barriers to prevent workers from falling in to them; **Exception:** Requirement doesn't apply to a "borrow pit," that is, a pit created to provide earth that can be used as fill at another site (*OHS Regs.*, Sec. 410)

NOVA SCOTIA

Employer must provide, at or near the sides of all temporary excavations that are deeper than 1.2 m, fences, guards or barricades that prevent a person from falling in, and keep those fences, guards or barricades in place at all times, except where they interfere with the excavation or other work being done (*Occ. Safety Gen. Regs.*, Sec. 169(4))

ONTARIO

If a person could fall into an excavation that's more than 2.4 metres deep, there must be barrier at least 1.1 metres high at the top of every wall of the excavation that's not sloped safely (in accordance with Sections 234(2)(e), (f) and (g) of the Regulation) (*Const. Proj. Reg.*, Sec. 233(4))

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

(a) Employer must ensure that an excavation or trench is adequately illuminated, has adequate warning lights conspicuously displayed, and has a barricade at all times while workers are working in the excavation or trench; and (b) Where an excavation or trench is made, employer must ensure that (i) adequate barricades are erected, and (ii) adequate warning lights are used at night (*OHS Gen. Regs.*, Sec. 12.11)

QUÉBEC

Continuous barriers or barricades that are at least 0.7 m high or a warning line that meets the requirements of Section 2.9.4.1, must be set up on the edge of any escarpment or digging: (i) that's more than 3 m in depth, (ii) or which might pose a hazard to workers or the public (*OHS Safety Code for Construction.*, Sec. 3.15.5)

SASKATCHEWAN

Employer or contractor must ensure that any temporary protective structure used to ensure the stability of a structure that may be affected by the trench or excavation: (a) Is designed, constructed, installed, used, maintained and dismantled to provide adequate protection to a worker who in an excavation, trench, tunnel, excavated shaft or borehole and to a worker who installs, uses, maintains or dismantles the temporary protective structure; and (b) Extends at least 300 millimetres above the wall of the excavation, trench, tunnel, excavated shaft or borehole to prevent material from falling in (*OHS Regs.*, Sec. 17-4)

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES & NUNAVUT

Employer must ensure that any temporary protective structure used to ensure the stability of a structure that may be affected by the trench or excavation: (a) Is designed, constructed, installed, used, maintained and dismantled to provide adequate protection to a worker who in an excavation, trench, tunnel, excavated shaft or borehole and to a worker who installs, uses, maintains or dismantles the temporary protective structure; and (b) Extends at least 300 millimetres above the wall of the excavation, trench, tunnel, excavated shaft or borehole to prevent material from falling in (*OHS Regs.*, Sec. 268)

YUKON

Where traffic crossing plates need to be used, shoring must not extend above ground level provided that other measures are taken to prevent excavated and other material from entering the excavation or trench (*OHS Regs.*, Sec. 10.65(6))