

Permit to Dig/

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Excavations Guidance



Coventry City Council

www.coventry.gov.uk

Introduction

The aim of this guidance is to introduce a safe working procedure to control significant risks via the implementation of a permit to work system. This document should be read in conjunction with the Permit to Work Guidance and HSG47- 'Avoiding Danger from Underground Services'. Any person involved with a Permit to Dig must be familiar with its content.

All site activities must be risk assessed. Generic assessments and safe systems of work must be made site specific.

Any activity involving the penetration of ground must be fully risk assessed by a competent person¹ prior to the commencement of works. The Permit to Dig provides a safe system of work for any operation which penetrates, lowers or disturbs the existing ground level to a depth greater than 100mm (unless work is in a footway and where a permit is ALWAYS required including footways through green areas). Examples of activities which are considered to be excavation works includes, but is not limited to:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| ■ Trenching | ■ New shrub bed | ■ Directional boring |
| ■ Playground refurbishment | ■ Fence posts | ■ Waste bin installation |
| ■ Digging | ■ Sign installation | ■ Trial holes and ground surveys |
| ■ Staking | ■ Using line pins | |

Clients have a duty to provide any information relevant to health and safety which they either possess, or can reasonably obtain. This would include all available information about services and their location, in particular, about those that are concealed such as underground services. In the absence of relevant information, consultation with a competent person¹ is required.

Contractors have a responsibility for provision and maintenance of safe systems of work to ensure, the health, safety and welfare of employees and others affected by their activities. This includes using the relevant information provided by the client, or their competent person, to locate the underground services prior to commencement of work.

The Council's Permit to Dig procedure applies to work carried out by or on behalf of Coventry City Council. All employees and contractors are expected to comply with the requirements of any permits that are in force. All excavation works should follow the Permit to Dig procedure as outlined in Appendix 1, 2 and 3.

The Council's 'Permit to Dig' procedure applies to work carried out on council funded work sites. Employees, contractors and all visitors are expected to comply with the requirements of any permits that are in force.

1. A competent person is someone who has sufficient training and experience to be able to identify and evaluate health and safety risks which are inherent with the type of work being undertaken

Significant Risks

- Serious injury or fatality
- Unplanned explosion
- Destruction of property

All services should be assumed live until disconnected and proven safe at the point of work.

Managers/Head Teachers

Under the Permit to Work Guidance, if you become the **Authoriser**, it is your responsibility to confirm employees / contractors undertaking any excavation work are competent to do so and have received suitable training in the identification of underground services.

Additional support and guidance is available from Coventry City Council's Health and Safety Services, or the Repairs and Maintenance Team (a charge may be made for latter service). Otherwise consult your own competent person.

It is possible for the **Requestor** and **Authoriser** to be the same person.

Employees/Contractors

Prior to undertaking any digging or excavation activities, you must be familiar with the Council's Permit to Work guidance.

Any person undertaking work that involves penetration of the ground greater than 100mm (0mm in the footway) must have a working knowledge of HSG 47, have signed the declarations on the Permit to Dig and confirm that they:

- have seen the activity specific risk assessment;
- have seen the safe system of work;
- have seen any associated utility drawings; and
- are in receipt of the relevant emergency contact details prior to work commencing.

Excavations sites must be adequately guarded with appropriate signage displayed on site, warning of the excavation and identifying the hazard below ground level.

All those involved in excavation must follow safe digging procedures, dig with caution and assume that unidentified underground services may be present.

Individuals using service detection equipment must be adequately trained and understand its limitations.

Damage to a Service

Any persons undertaking excavation work must be familiar with all the emergency procedures in the event of a service strike.

In the event of contact being made with underground services, any damage should be reported to the **Authoriser** and the relevant utility provider immediately. No further work should be undertaken in the vicinity of any damaged service until the owner has investigated its condition and given approval for work to recommence. Emergency contact details of the **Authoriser** and the utility provider must be available on site to ensure immediate reporting.

If a service is damaged:

- **STOP** work immediately
- **REPORT** the damage to the Authoriser (who must immediately contact the appropriate utility provider)
- **DO NOT** resume work until the utility provider, Authoriser and Issuer deems the area safe
- **ONLY RECOMMENCE** work once an amended or replacement permit has been issued

Excavation related incidents

In the event of any incident including accidents and near misses relating to an excavation, please refer to the Accident/Incident Investigation – Guidance for Managers available on Beacon.

Document retention

Following an incident, the following documents/information must be kept:

- Permit to Dig
- Method Statement
- Risk Assessments
- Incident Investigation and related documents
- Site Inductions
- Evidence of training/ competency to use equipment/plant involved in incident

The timeframe that these documents need to be retained is 4 years. If there is an injury to any person as a result of the incident then please refer to the Accident/Incident Investigation – Guidance for Managers.

Discovery of uncharted service

In the event of the discovery of an uncharted/ unmarked service, work should be stopped immediately and the **Operator** must contact the **Authoriser** for further instruction. The **Authoriser** should consult the Issuer to decide how to proceed. The **Issuer** may update the existing permit document, or issue a new permit to reflect the current conditions on site.

Safe Digging

Every excavation, regardless of depth of dig, must be preceded by the use of a cable location device such as a CAT Scanner (and Genny where practical). These can assist in tracing the actual location of the underground cables on site. Repeated use must be made of the location device (CAT Scanner) at every 300mm (12"), or spade depth, as the excavation progresses.

The same applies when using a mechanical excavator. An 'observer' must oversee any mechanical excavation and ensure that they maintain visual contact with the operator during the excavation. The observer must advise the plant operator in the event that an underground cable is identified.

Exemptions to Permit to Dig Requirement

A Permit to Dig is not required for:

- a) Routine maintenance of existing / established shrub beds as this is not considered to be an excavation when digging less than **300mm** (spade depth).
- b) Excavations where the depth of penetration is to be less than **100mm unless the excavation is in a footway.**
- c) Regular maintenance of a static site where up to date service plans and utility drawings are available. Static sites include but are not exclusive to, **green areas, (including grass verges and parks) and schools.**

Where point 'C' cannot be met, or assurances cannot be given, **a permit must be issued.**

Schemes

The **Issuer** can issue a Permit to Dig to cover a 'scheme of work' involving more than one excavation. This can only occur on a scheme managed and controlled by the same **Requestor**. This could include short duration remedial work in one location or replacement of street lighting columns along a stretch of the same road. It must be remembered that individual permit forms must be completed to identify hazards at each excavation site under the scheme. The **Issuer** will number each excavation site using marker paint and ensure that these numbers correspond with the relevant Permit form for ease of reference. Service drawings will be required for each form completed. The **Authoriser** must sign off each Permit form completed under the scheme.

Permit Timeframes

The lead times for permits is up to a maximum of 10 working days prior to the date of work commencing on **footways or highways.**

For works in **green areas, including grass verges and parks**, where service markings may be removed by maintenance activities such as grass cutting, lead times should be considered carefully and be as short as possible.

The Permit to Dig must not last longer than 3 months from the start date of work commencing. After this date the permit has expired (see below), and a new one must be issued for work to recommence.

Expiry and Cancellation of Permits

All finished and expired permits should be fully completed in a suitable timeframe, no later than 15 working days, following their expiry or the completion of related works.

Feedback

If you have any feedback regarding this document or relating to the permit to dig process please provide this feedback to your Health and Safety Advisor. This enables us to improve the process to ensure it is working effectively for permit to dig users.

Legislation

CDM (Regs) 2015: [The Construction \(Design and Management\) Regulations 2015](#)

HSE Guidance

Avoiding Danger from Underground Services [HSG 47](#)

Notes

- The work identified in Part 1 of the Permit to Dig must not commence until **all** the recipients' signatures are on the permit (**parts 1-5 fully completed**).
 - **There must be no by-passing of this requirement.**
- A permit is not transferable. It only applies for work at the location specified in Part 1 of the permit.
- If job conditions change (e.g. discovery of unidentified services, etc.) work **MUST** stop, and the **Issuer** must be consulted for advice. In this event the Permit to Dig must be amended, or preferably cancelled and a new one issued.
- If a power cable, high pressure gas main or other dangerous service is damaged, Occupation Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service and the Head of Service/ Service Manager must be notified immediately by the **Authoriser**. An investigation must then be undertaken by the **Authoriser** in liaison with the **Requestor**. Health and Safety Services will also undertake further investigation as and when required.

APPENDIX 1

PROCEDURE

The procedure for issuing and cancelling a Permit to Dig is as follows:

- a) The **Requestor** will identify the requirement for use of the permit system by deciding whether the work will involve excavation within any footway, or penetration of the ground at a depth of less than 100mm. The **Requestor** can include Highways, Head Teachers, or anybody else who identifies a need for a permit.
- b) A request is made to Coventry City Council's Helpdesk for the **Repairs and Maintenance team** to provide a Permit to Dig.
- c) The **Issuer** (Repairs and Maintenance) will undertake any necessary investigation to confirm need for a permit. This may involve:
 - i) Obtaining service drawing for the planned excavation site where available; and
 - ii) Scanning the planned excavation site with service detection equipment.
- d) If a Permit to Dig is required, the **Issuer** will complete **parts 1 and 2** of the permit before issuing the permit to the **Authoriser*** (Site Agents, Supervisors and Head Teachers etc.). The **Issuer** should keep a copy of the permit document either physical or electronic (e.g. a scan or photo)
- e) **Authoriser*** will need to complete **parts 3 and 4** of the permit. This will involve:
 - i) Confirming competence of Operator
 - ii) Ensuring Risk Assessments and Safe Systems of Work in place
 - iii) Checking service detection equipment on site is calibrated (certificate available); and
 - iv) Briefing the **Operator** (e.g. Road Worker 1) and their team of the hazards identified within the Permit to Dig
- f) The **Operator** must sign and date **part 5** to confirm that they have read and understood the conditions of the Permit to Dig.
- g) The **Authoriser** should keep a copy of the permit document and the original copy must be retained on site by the **Operator**.
- h) ***At this point the Permit to Dig becomes operational and the work specified can commence.***
- i) Operator to carry out work to completion, and return permit to the **Authoriser**.
- j) On completion of works or expiry of permit, the **Authoriser** will sign **part 6** of the Permit to Dig to confirm that the work is completed/partially*, completed and site has been left in a safe condition and that all those working under the permit have been notified that the permit is no longer active.
- k) Permit returned to **Issuer** who will complete part 7 of the permit before filing it.

NB. *This should be carried out by a competent person. Please consult your health and safety representative or competent person for advice.

APPENDIX 2

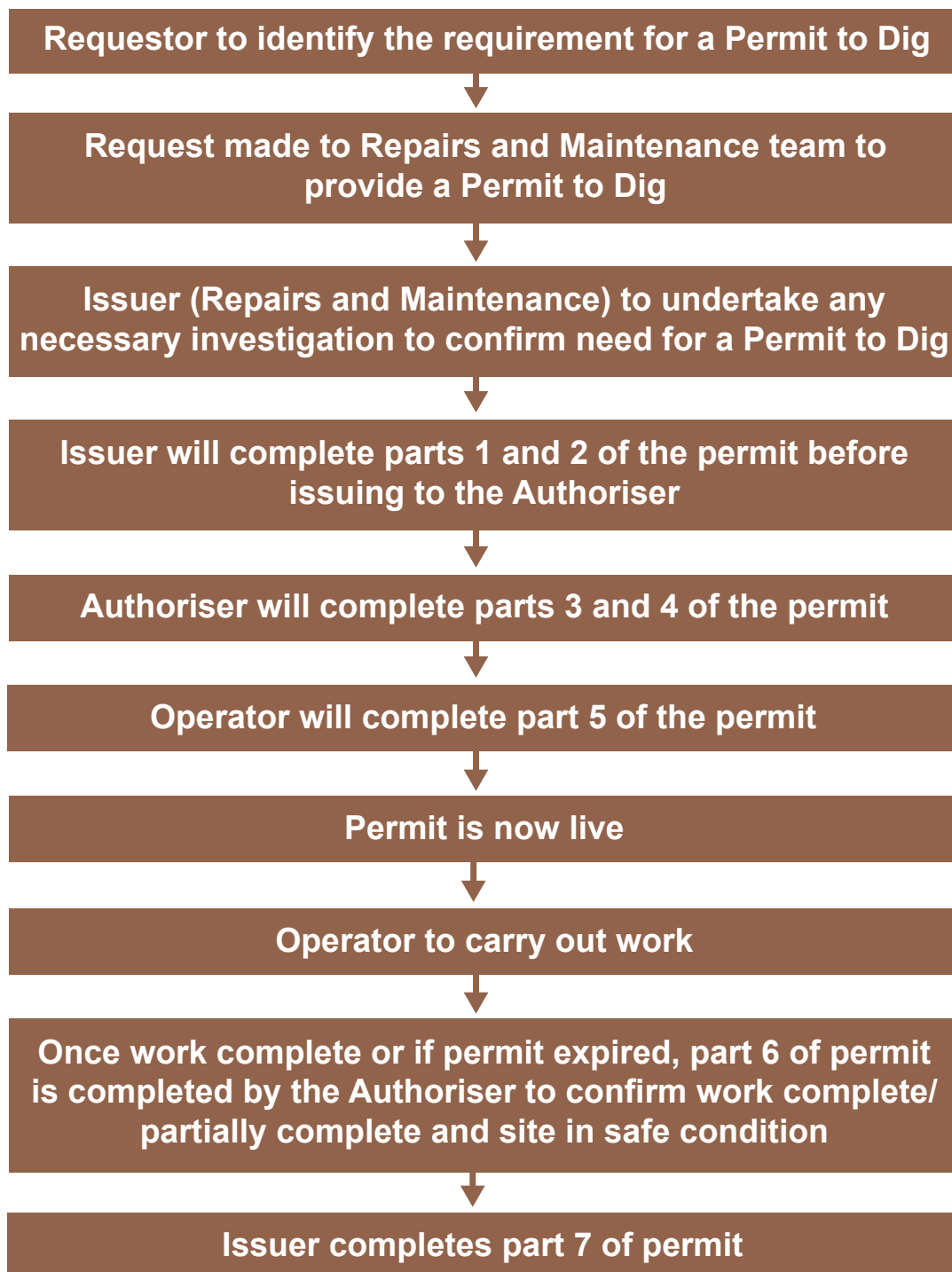
PERMIT TO DIG

The Permit to Dig provides a safe system of work for any operation which penetrates, lowers or disturbs the existing ground level to a depth greater than 100mm (unless work is in a footway and where a permit is ALWAYS required).

THIS PERMIT TO WORK DOES NOT ENSURE TOTAL SAFETY; ITS AIM IS TO IDENTIFY A DANGER THAT CANNOT BE SEEN AND GIVE INSTRUCTIONS THAT MUST BE OBSERVED.

ISSUER to complete parts 1 & 2 and retain a copy (physical or electronic)			
PART 1: JOB DETAILS		Reference No:	
REQUESTOR Name:		If sub-contractor please give details:	
Nature of Job:		Site Location:	
PART 2: SERVICE LOCATION AND DETECTION			
	Identified on site? ✓/✗	Available service drawings provided? ✓/✗	Marked up on site? ✓/✗
WATER			
GAS			
ELECTRIC (Please state voltage if known)			
BT			
OTHER (Please state)			
OVERHEAD SERVICES			
Total number of drawings:		Date of site visit:	
State type of equipment used to locate services (model and serial number):			
Planned permit start date:		Permit expiry date:	
AUTHORISER to complete parts 3 & 4 ,and retain copy (physical or electronic) following completion of part 5			
PART 3: CONFIRMATION parts 1 & 2 complete and service drawings attached		Sign & date:	
PART 4: PRECAUTIONS		✓/✗	Comment
Persons undertaking excavation work have been shown the relevant risk assessments and safety system of work for this activity.			
Persons undertaking excavation work are in receipt of, and understand the relevant service drawings.			
Confirm that a calibrated location device is available for use on site prior to excavation work being undertaken.			
Copy of permit to dig to be provided on site			
Emergency contact numbers and details:			
OPERATOR to complete part 5 and keep original copy of permit document on site			
PART 5: OPERATOR	I confirm I am receipt of, and understand the contents of the permit and associated service drawings, risk assessments and safe systems of work.	Sign & date:	
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: To be used by AUTHORISER and ISSUER to record any additional relevant information whilst permit is operational			
PART 6: HAND BACK AUTHORISER to complete and retain copy of permit document	I confirm that the work has been completed/partially completed, has been left in a safe condition, and operatives have been informed that permit no longer in effect.	Sign & date:	
PART 7: HAND BACK ISSUER to complete and file permit document	I confirm I am in receipt of the completed permit, which is now cancelled and no longer in effect.	Sign & date:	

APPENDIX 3 Permit to dig flowchart



Contacts

For further information contact:

Permit requests/Repairs and Maintenance Team on 024 7683 2960
or e-mail simon.amos@coventry.gov.uk

If you need this information in another language or format
please contact Health and Safety on 024 7683 3172