

Permit to dig

Blank permit for one excavation where there may be underground services.

HSE guidance says a permit system may be appropriate for particularly hazardous work near underground services. Whether or not you use one, digging near underground services needs a safe system of work: plan the work, find and mark the services, and dig safely.

The work

Permit number _____ Site address _____

Location and extent of the dig _____ Work to be done _____

Maximum depth _____ Digging method _____

Person in charge of the dig _____ Company _____

Valid from (date and time) _____ Valid until (date and time) _____

Sketch of the dig and the services found (or attach a marked-up drawing)

Information about services

Ask the owners of underground services for plans or other information before work starts. Plans alone are not enough to locate services, and may not show every service connection.

Service	Plans obtained	Located on site	Marked	Notes
Electricity				
Gas				
Water				
Telecoms				
Drains and sewers				
Other:				

Locating and marking

Someone with the right experience surveys the whole work area with suitable locating equipment and marks the line of each service found. Use trial holes to confirm a service's position and depth.

Locating equipment used _____ Survey carried out by _____

Date of survey _____ Trial holes (number and where) _____

Safe digging

Agree the digging method near each service before work starts, then expose services by careful hand digging. Use the locator again often as the dig goes deeper. Never use exposed services as handholds or footholds.

If a cable is struck, the machine driver stays in the cab. Keep everyone away until the cable owner has made it safe.

Check	Yes	N/A	Notes
Service plans on site and explained to the dig team			
Services located and marked on the ground			
Trial holes confirm position and depth			
Where a machine digs, someone assists the driver from a safe position			
Insulated hand tools for digging near electric cables			
Excavation support, edge protection and a safe way in and out planned			
Everyone knows what to do if a service is damaged			

Issue and acceptance

The issuer signs to confirm the precautions are in place. The person in charge of the work signs to accept the permit, and explains the work, the hazards and the precautions to everyone working under it.

	Name	Signature	Date and time
Issued by			
Accepted by (person in charge of the work)			

Extension or shift handover

Before the permit is extended or handed to a new person in charge, check the area is still safe to work in, brief the new person and set a new end time.

Date and time	New end time	Handed over by	Accepted by

Hand-back and cancellation

Before backfilling, support and protect exposed services, put any warning tape or tiles back above them, and tell the service owner if their plans were wrong.

When the work is finished, the person in charge of it signs to hand the permit back. The issuer checks the area and cancels the permit.

	Name	Signature	Date and time
Work finished and area left safe			
Permit cancelled by issuer			

Based on: HSE guidance HSG47, Avoiding danger from underground services (third edition), paragraphs 22 to 28, 39, 82, 95 to 115, 128 to 135 and 163 to 166; HSE guidance HSG250 on permit-to-work systems.

- HSE, Avoiding danger from underground services (HSG47): <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg47.htm>
- HSE, Guidance on permit-to-work systems (HSG250): <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg250.htm>

Blank template from The Site Book, October 2026. Fill it in for the actual job and site.