

DEPARTMENT OF LICENSES AND INSPECTIONS CODE BULLETIN OF INFORMATION No. B-0503		CODE OF GENERAL ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA <hr/> TITLE 4 — Building Construction and Occupancy Code
SUBJECT OF BULLETIN: EXCAVATIONS AND THE PROTECTION OF FOUNDATIONS		REFERENCE CODE SECTION(S): B-1804.1
ISSUED BY		ISSUE DATE December 2, 2005
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TITLE: Chief Code Official		PAGE 1 OF 2

BACKGROUND

The City has recently experienced several building collapses attributed to builders digging basements and footings too close to existing buildings. In particular, many older buildings in Philadelphia are supported on rubble stone foundation walls with minimal or no spread footings below. When such walls are exposed or undermined they become unstable and are prone to sudden catastrophic failure. Building collapses have also been caused by property owners that attempt to increase the height of their basements by digging out the basement floor. Though the danger is most acute with rubble stone foundation walls, damage and failure can occur whenever structures are undermined, regardless of their age or condition. This Code Bulletin will set forth construction document requirements to aid in enforcing the code section that addresses this concern.

CODE REFERENCE

B-1804.1 - Excavations for any purpose shall not remove lateral support from any footing or foundation without first underpinning or protecting the footing or foundation against settlement or lateral translation.

DIRECTION

PART A

A Building Permit for new construction, additions, underground tank installations and any alteration that includes an excavation shall not be issued unless:

1. The construction documents include a detailed plan for protecting the footings and foundations of buildings and structures from settlement or lateral translation. This plan for protection of buildings must be designed by a registered professional engineer. ---- or ----
2. In the event that no special precautions are warranted, the registered design professional has provided a statement that, "No special precautions or measures are required to protect existing footings and foundation on the subject property or on the immediately adjoining property(ies)".

Exception: Construction projects such as certain single family ground floor additions that do not require the seal of a registered design professional as detailed in Administrative Code Section A-304.1 and A304.1(R).

PART B

When underpinning or structural support is specified or required, Special Inspections by a registered professional engineer shall be performed. A Building Permit shall not be issued unless the required Special Inspection Form(s) are submitted.

PART C

A Stop Work Order shall be issued whenever:

1. An excavation is performed that is not in accordance with the approved plans and special precautions;
2. Underpinning or structural support is installed in the absence of the special inspector;
3. The Code Official determines that a dangerous condition is being created by any excavation.