

Excavation Permit

FAQ

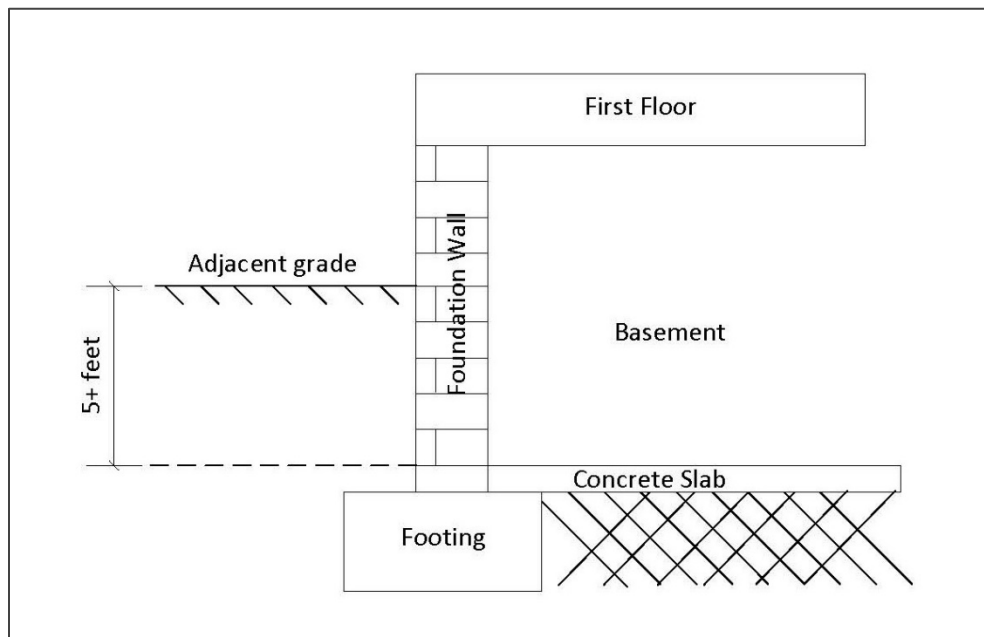
Q. Is an Excavation Permit required for my scope of work?

An Excavation Permit is required for excavation that is greater than 5 feet below an adjacent grade as shown on Detail A, with the exception of utility trenches and geotechnical explorations. The below table identifies if an Excavation Permit is required for common scopes of work.

| Scope of work | Is an Excavation Permit required? | Conditions / Additional requirements |
|---|--|--|
| Replacement of a basement slab | Yes - If the basement is more than 5 feet below adjacent grade or excavation exceeds 5 feet in depth. | If there is another structure within 10 feet of this excavation work, the protection of property requirements will also apply. ¹ |
| Removal of fill material | Yes – If the excavation exceeds 5 feet below adjacent grade. | If there is another structure within 10 feet of the work, the protection of property requirements will also apply. ¹ |
| Installation of a slab-on-grade for new construction / addition | It depends - If the work requires excavation more than 5 feet below adjacent grade, which may include the removal of fill materials, then an Excavation Permit is required. Otherwise, a separate Excavation Permit is not required. | The proposed work must correspond to the recommendations of the Soils Investigation Report. |
| Plumbing work (regulated by the Philadelphia Plumbing Code) | No - This is classified as a utility for the purpose of plumbing work. | |
| Installation or removal of underground storage tank | No - This is classified as utility work. | If any underpinning work is proposed, an Excavation Permit is required for the underpinning. |
| Underpinning | Yes | Associated protection of property requirements will apply. ¹ |
| Demolition | No - Excavation work performed under a Complete Demolition permit does not require a separate Excavation Permit. | If any modifications to a party wall, including demolition of adjoining / abutting structure; severing of structural roof or wall covering spanning properties; or demolition within 90 feet of a historic structure, the protection of property requirements will apply. ¹ |

¹ For more details on protection of property requirements, visit the [website](#).

Detail A



Q. Do I need an excavation contractor license to perform excavation work?

If an Excavation Permit is required for the scope of work, you must have a licensed excavation contractor perform the work. Refer to [Code Bulletin B-0503-R3 \(Excavations and Protection of Adjacent Property – Public and Private\)](#) for additional information. Also visit the [website](#) for license requirements. If a separate Excavation Permit is not required for the scope of work, any licensed contractor may perform the work and no separate excavation license is required.

Q. If my project includes multiple buildings, do I need a separate Excavation Permit for each building?

If the buildings are on one property, only one Excavation Permit is required. If the buildings are on separate properties, a separate Excavation Permit is required for each property.

Q. I applied for my permit before January 1, 2023. Do excavation requirements apply?

While a separate Excavation Permit is not required, the project must adhere to regulations in effect prior to January 1, 2023. Please refer to Appendix A of [Code Bulletin B-0503-R3 \(Excavations and the Protection of Adjacent Property – Public and Private\)](#) for those requirements that apply to any permit filed before January 1, 2023.

Q. I need to amend my permit to increase the depth of excavation. Do I need to apply for an Excavation Permit?

This depends on when the permit application was submitted and the change in depth.

If submitted prior to January 1, 2023, new Excavation Permit and related protection of property requirements do not apply. The project must still comply with requirements in effect prior to January 1, 2023, as referenced in Appendix A of [Code Bulletin B-0503-R3 \(Excavations and the Protection of Adjacent Property – Public and Private\)](#).

If submitted after January 1, 2023, AND the change in depth will cross the 5 feet threshold, an Excavation Permit and associated protection of property requirements shall apply. Refer to [Code Bulletin B-0503-R3 \(Excavation and the Protection of Adjacent Property – Public and Private\)](#) for more information.

If submitted after January 1, 2023, AND the original depth exceeded 5 feet, the increase shall not trigger new requirements; however, the Engineer may require additional protection or monitoring. The adjacent property owner must also be notified of any change to project scope.

Q. Do I need an Excavation Permit prior to the issuance of the Building Permit.

No, the Excavation Permit is not required to be issued prior to the Building Permit; however, the following apply:

1. No Building Permit may be issued until the Excavation Permit is approved and in “Ready to Issue” or “Issued” status.
2. A Building Permit will be placed in “Stop Work” Status until the related Excavation Permit is issued. The Contractor must contact the Inspection Office to resolve this status once the Excavation Permit is issued.

Q. The proposed foundation system does not extend more than 5 feet below adjacent grade; however, the geotechnical investigation report requires the removal of existing fill to a depth exceeding 5 feet below adjacent grade. Do I need to apply for an Excavation Permit?

Yes, the removal of fill exceeds a depth of 5 feet below adjacent grade.

Questions?

Call 311 or (215) 686-8686 (if outside Philadelphia) or submit an online form via <http://www.phila.gov/li/get-help>.

Disclaimer:

This interpretation, policy or code application is intended to provide guidance to staff for consistency of review and is subject to change without notice. Application of this interpretation, policy or code application to specific projects may vary. There may be other ways to comply with the Code. If so, you are not required to use this method. You may want to investigate other options or consult with a professional identifying an equally code compliant solution.