



Grave Diggers Safe Working Practices

1. INTRODUCTION

Grave digging should not be taken in isolation from any other type of excavation and the requirements of the Construction Regulations will apply, as indeed will the requirements of the Health & Safety at Work Act. This safety note has been produced so that all personnel will be aware of the precautions to be taken and will therefore reduce the risk of injury to the lowest possible level.

2. HAND TOOLS

Check all hand tools before commencing the excavation. All tools with defects should be discharged until such time they can be repaired or renewed.

3. SHORING

There are two main shoring systems used, hydraulic and Teleshore, both types must be inspected for damage prior to inserting into excavation. This equipment is fairly robust and two people are required for utilising these shores.

4. EXCAVATION

All practicable steps must be taken to prevent damage and prevent burying or trapping in any depth of excavation. In carrying out an excavation, the soil conditions can vary widely, often in short distances. No soil, whatever its nature, can be relied upon to support its own weight for any length of time - let alone any additional loads which may be imposed by plant and materials. Even a small fall of earth is capable of inflicting serious injury, even if it does not kill.

Whatever the ground conditions are the shoring must be used when the depth of the excavation exceeds 1.2m and must remain in place until the interment has taken place. The competent person on site must carry out a risk assessment to decide if shoring is required at depths less than 1.2m.

Access to and from the excavation must be carried out by the use of a pole ladder. All spoil from the excavation must be placed at least 1m from the edge in order to minimise the risk of collapse. All edges of the grave must be protected by planks so that the weight of persons and tools will be evenly distributed over as large an area as possible. All excavations must be covered by boards or a grave cover when digging is not in progress or left unattended, particularly overnight as normal burial procedure dictates that the grave is excavated on the day previous to the burial taking place.

5. **PROTECTIVE CLOTHING**

Overalls and protective boots must be worn at all times. Protective helmets must be worn when working in conjunction with the excavator or in the excavation. Eye protectors should be worn when breaking hard material.

6. **BREAKER GUNS (KANGO)**

There may be occasions when it is necessary to utilise this equipment. It will be hired, as the amount of use does not warrant keeping one as an asset. Training will be required if this kit is needed.

7. **MECHANICAL DIGGERS**

Only trained and certificate personnel will use the mechanical digger when it is required to carry out a grave excavation.

8. **EDGE BOARDING**

On completion of the excavation and prior to the burial taking place, timber boards will be used to secure a safe and secure area for the family mourners to stand on around the perimeter of the grave. All timber boards must be at least one inch thick and must extend at least 18 inches beyond the outermost edges of the grave. All imitation grass matting used to mask the inside of the grave walls must be in sound condition and must be laid smooth and level.

9. **HYGIENE**

All cuts and abrasions should be protected by a waterproof plaster. Wash hands and arms thoroughly before partaking of any food or drink.

10. **TETANUS**

All personnel employed in grave digging will be required to submit themselves for tetanus immunisation at the required intervals.