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Excavations and temporary works are critical to many construction projects but present significant risks if not managed correctly. This toolbox talk highlights key safety considerations to prevent accidents and ensure compliance with regulations.

Hazards in Excavations

1. **Collapse or cave-in** – Risks of entrapment and serious injury.
2. **Falling materials** – Tools or debris can strike workers.
3. **Underground services** – Risk of striking live cables, gas, or water lines.
4. **Confined space hazards** – Including toxic gases or low oxygen levels.
5. **Falls into excavations** – Risk for both workers and equipment.

Key Safety Measures

1. Planning

- Ensure a competent person understands Temporary Works and where they are required for excavations
- A competent person should be able to identify the parameters on which TWD is required or should a proprietary support system used
- Ensure that a comprehensive design brief is submitted to the Temporary works designer
- Ensure that a Risk Assessment Method Statement is in place that outlines the safe System of work to be followed for the safe installation and removal of the temporary works arrangements
- Locate and mark underground services before digging. Underground services should be located by CSCS LUGS certified personnel.

2. Shoring and Support

- Always use appropriate shoring, trench boxes, or battering/ stepping
- Avoid the use of any heavy/ vibrating machinery or plant near the edges of excavations – this can displace and weaken the ground potentially causing collapse.

3. Access and Egress

- Provide safe means of entry and exit, such as ladders, stairs, or ramps.
- Keep all access and egress routes tidy and clear of trip hazards.
- Consider Risk from Confined Spaces

4. Edge Protection

- Install barriers or guardrails to prevent falls into excavations.
- Install hazard signage, warning of deep excavations and edges at height.
- Consider berms around excavations in areas of plant movement
- Consider chocks and sleepers/ Kelly blocks as physical controls

TOOLBOX TALK – Excavation & Temporary Works

5. Inspections

- Inspect excavations and temporary works regularly and after adverse weather. Look for water ingress, ground weakness, or partial/full collapse in excavation walls and surrounding areas.

6. Safe Work Practices

- Never work within unsupported excavations.
- Use spotters and maintain good communication around plant and equipment.
- Continuously utilise air quality testing in enclosed spaces.

7. Emergency Preparedness

- Ensure all workers know the emergency plan, including rescue procedures.
- Keep first aid kits and emergency equipment stocked and in good condition.

Excavation and temporary works safety is everyone's responsibility. Follow procedures, report hazards immediately, and never take shortcuts.