



**ONTARIO  
PROVINCIAL  
STANDARD  
SPECIFICATION**

**OPSS.PROV 401  
APRIL 2025**

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**CONSTRUCTION SPECIFICATION FOR  
TRENCHING, BACKFILLING, AND COMPACTING**

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**401.01 SCOPE**

This specification covers the requirements for excavating, backfilling, and compacting trenches for the installation of sanitary and storm pipe sewers; pipe culverts and end sections; pipe subdrains; forcemains and associated appurtenances; watermains and associated appurtenances; and other underground Utilities.

**401.02 REFERENCES**

This specification refers to the following standards, specifications, or publications:

**Ontario Provincial Standard Specifications, Construction**

OPSS 206	Grading
OPSS 403	Rock Excavation for Pipelines, Utilities, and Associated Structures in Open Cut
OPSS 404	Support Systems
OPSS 412	Sewage Forcemain Installation in Open Cut
OPSS 441	Watermain Installation in Open Cut
OPSS 490	Site Preparation for Pipelines, Utilities, and Associated Structures
OPSS 491	Preservation, Protection, and Reconstruction of Existing Facilities

OPSS 492	Site Restoration Following Installation of Pipelines, Utilities, and Associated Structures
OPSS 501	Compacting
OPSS 510	Removal
OPSS 517	Dewatering of Pipeline, Utility, and Associated Structure Excavation
OPSS 539	Temporary Protection Systems
OPSS 902	Excavating and Backfilling - Structures

## **Ontario Provincial Standard Specifications, Material**

OPSS 1010	Aggregates - Base, Subbase, Select Subgrade, and Backfill Material
OPSS 1359	Unshrinkable Backfill

Provincial Statute

*Occupational Health and Safety Act*

R.S.O. 1990, c. O.1, as amended

Ontario Regulations 213/91 - Regulations for Construction Projects, as amended

### **401.03 DEFINITIONS**

For the purpose of this specification, the following definitions apply:

**Additional Excavation** means all excavation ordered in writing by the Contract Administrator beyond excavation specified in the Contract Documents.

**Associated Appurtenances** means as defined in OPSS 412 and OPSS 441.

**Backfilling** means the operation of filling the trench with bedding, cover, and backfill material or embedment and backfill material.

**Backfill Material** means fill material used above the embedment or cover material and below the lower of the subgrade or finished grade or the original ground.

**Bedding Class** means a classification system that defines the depth of the bedding material.

**Bedding Material** means material as it relates to rigid pipe, from the bottom of the trench to the bottom of the cover.

**Cover Material** means the material placed from the top of the bedding to the bottom of the backfill for rigid pipe.

**Embedment Material** means material as it relates to flexible pipe, from the bottom of the trench to the bottom of the backfill.

**Excavation, Earth and Rock** means the excavation classified as earth and rock according to OPSS 206.

**Flexible Pipe** means pipe that can deflect 2% or more without cracking such as polyvinyl chloride, polyethylene, or steel pipe.

**Imported Material** means material obtained from a source other than the Working Area.

**Native Material** means the material removed to form an excavation within the Working Area for return to the same or other excavation.

**Pipe** means sanitary or storm pipe sewers, watermains, forcemains, pipe culverts, and subdrains.

**Rigid Pipe** means pipe that cannot deflect more than 2% without cracking such as concrete pipe.

**Trench** means as defined in Ontario Regulations 213/91.

**Trenching** means the earth or rock excavation required to construct a trench in which to install pipes and their associated appurtenances.

**Trench Width** means the horizontal distance between the trench walls as measured at the bedding grade.

**Unshrinkable Fill** means as defined in OPSS 1359.

## **401.05 MATERIALS**

### **401.05.01 Embedment Material**

Embedment material shall be one of the following, as specified in the Contract Documents:

- a) Granular A.
- b) Granular B, Type I, II, or III, with 100% passing the 26.5 mm sieve.
- c) Unshrinkable fill.

### **401.05.02 Bedding Material**

Bedding material shall be one of the following, as specified in the Contract Documents:

- a) Granular A.
- b) Granular B, Type I, II, or III, with 100% passing the 26.5 mm sieve.
- c) Unshrinkable fill.

### **401.05.03 Cover Material**

Cover material shall be one of the following, as specified in the Contract Documents:

- a) Granular A.
- b) Granular B, Type I, II, or III, with 100% passing the 26.5 mm sieve.
- c) Native material.

### **401.05.04 Granular Material**

Granular material shall be according to OPSS 1010.

### **401.05.05 Backfill Material**

#### **401.05.05.01 General**

Backfill material shall be one of the following, as specified in the Contract Documents:

- a) Granular A.
- b) Granular B, Type I, II, or III.
- c) Unshrinkable fill.

d) Native material.

**401.05.05.02 Native and Imported Material**

Native and imported material shall be approved by the Contract Administrator. All material shall be free from frozen lumps, cinders, ashes, refuse, vegetable or organic matter, rocks and boulders over 150 mm in any dimension, and other deleterious material.

**401.05.06 Unshrinkable Fill**

Unshrinkable fill shall be according to OPSS 1359.

**401.07 CONSTRUCTION**

**401.07.01 General**

Trenches shall be stable and dry, unless designated as subaqueous work.

**401.07.02 Site Preparation**

Site preparation shall be according to OPSS 490.

**401.07.03 Preservation and Protection of Existing Facilities**

Preservation and protection of existing facilities shall be according to OPSS 491.

**401.07.04 Removals**

Removals shall be according to OPSS 510.

**401.07.05 Dewatering**

Dewatering shall be according to OPSS 517 for placement of pipe or to OPSS 902 for placement of structure.

**401.07.06 Support Systems**

Support systems shall be according to OPSS 404.

**401.07.07 Temporary Protection Systems**

The construction of all temporary protection systems shall be according to OPSS 539. When the stability, safety, or function of an existing roadway, railway, other works, or proposed works may be impaired due to the method of operation, appropriate protection shall be provided. Protection may include sheathing, shoring, and the driving of piles, when necessary.

**401.07.08 Removal of Frozen Ground**

Written permission shall be obtained from the Contract Administrator prior to starting any excavation in frozen ground. The method used for removal of frozen ground shall not cause damage to adjacent structures or Utilities.

**401.07.09 Trenching**

Trenches shall be excavated to the lines, grades, and dimensions specified in the Contract Documents. The width of the trench at the bottom shall not exceed the width at the top.

Trenching for pipe culverts shall include the excavation for frost tapers and end sections.

No more than 15 m of trench shall be open in advance of the completed pipe system.

The Contract Administrator shall be notified immediately if the bottom of the trench appears to give an unsuitable foundation.

When installing rigid pipe, if the trench is excavated wider than the allowable width without authorization, the Contract Administrator may require the use of a stronger pipe or a higher class of bedding or both.

If the trench depth is excavated beyond the limits of the required excavation without the Contract Administrator's authorization, granular material shall be placed and compacted in the trench to reinstate the required trench limits prior to backfilling the trench as specified in the Contract Documents. Alternatively, another structurally accepted design shall be provided by adjusting the limits of the excavation prior to backfilling.

Rock excavation for trenches shall be according to OPSS 403.

#### **401.07.10 Backfilling and Compacting**

##### **401.07.10.01 General**

The diameter or the span and rise of flexible pipes shall not vary from the manufactured dimensions by more than 5% during cover and backfill placing operations.

Pipe installation and backfilling shall be completed prior to the start of subbase and base course construction over the pipe location.

Compacting of embedment, bedding, cover, and backfill materials during pipe installation shall be according to OPSS 501.

Prior to allowing the movement of any construction equipment or vehicular traffic over the buried infrastructure, the depth of backfill shall be sufficient enough to protect the buried infrastructure from damage.

##### **401.07.10.02 Embedment**

Placement of embedment material shall be as described in the Bedding and Cover clauses.

##### **401.07.10.03 Bedding**

Pipe bedding shall be of the class specified in the Contract Documents.

The surface upon which the pipe is to be laid shall be true to grade and alignment.

The pipe bedding shall be shaped to the dimensions specified in the Contract Documents. When bell and spigot pipe is to be laid, recesses shall be shaped to receive the bells.

Bedding material placed in the haunches shall be compacted prior to continued placement of cover material.

Bedding material shall be placed in uniform layers not exceeding 200 mm in thickness, loose measurement, and each layer shall be compacted according to OPSS 501 before a subsequent layer is placed.

Bedding material shall be placed on each side of the pipe and shall be completed simultaneously. At no time shall the levels on each side differ by more than the 200 mm uncompacted layer.

#### **401.07.10.04                      Cover**

Cover material shall be placed so that damage to or movement of the pipe is avoided.

Cover material shall be placed in uniform layers not exceeding 200 mm in thickness, loose measurement, and each layer shall be compacted according to OPSS 501 before a subsequent layer is placed.

Cover material shall be placed on each side of the pipe and shall be completed simultaneously. At no time shall the levels on each side differ by more than the 200 mm uncompacted layer.

#### **401.07.10.05                      Backfill**

Backfill material shall be placed in uniform layers not exceeding 300 mm in thickness, loose measurement, for the full width of the trench and each layer shall be compacted according to OPSS 501 before a subsequent layer is placed.

Backfill material shall be placed to a minimum depth of 900 mm above the crown of the pipe before power operated tractors or rolling equipment shall be used for compacting. Uniform layers of backfill material exceeding 300 mm in thickness may be placed with the approval of the Contract Administrator.

When the Contract specifies native backfill material, acceptable earth backfill material may be substituted with the approval of the Contract Administrator. In areas within the roadway, for a depth equal to the frost treatment, the earth backfill material shall have frost susceptible characteristics similar to the adjacent material.

#### **401.07.11                              Additional Trenching, Backfilling, and Compacting**

Additional trenching, backfilling, and compacting shall be as described in the Trenching and Backfilling and Compacting subsections.

Unsuitable material shall be excavated and the resulting excavation shall be backfilled and compacted to obtain a suitable foundation.

#### **401.07.12                              Site Restoration**

Site restoration shall be according to OPSS 492.

#### **401.07.13                              Management of Excess Material**

Management of excess material shall be as specified in the Contract Documents.

### **401.09                                      MEASUREMENT FOR PAYMENT**

#### **401.09.01                              Actual Measurement**

##### **401.09.01.01                      Additional Trenching, Backfilling, and Compacting**

Additional trenching, backfilling, and compacting shall be based on the volume of the additional excavation measured in cubic metres prior to installation of the pipe.

The volume of the excavation that is in addition to the limits specified in the Contract Documents shall be determined.

## **401.10 BASIS OF PAYMENT**

### **401.10.01 Trenching, Backfilling, and Compacting**

Payment at the Contract price for the appropriate tender items for the installation of sanitary and storm pipe sewers, pipe culverts and end sections, subdrains, forcemains and associated appurtenances, watermain and associated appurtenances, and other underground Utilities shall be full compensation for all labour, Equipment, and Material to do the work.

When the Contract contains separate items for work required by this specification, payment shall be at the Contract prices and according to the specifications for such work.

Any expenses for remedial work resulting from unauthorized over-excavation of the trench width and depth shall be borne by the Contractor.

When native material is deemed unsuitable for backfill for reasons other than those attributed to the Contractor's mode of operation, any additional work done to provide acceptable backfill beyond the work herein specified shall be administered as a Change in the Work.

### **401.10.02 Additional Trenching, Backfilling, and Compacting - Item**

Payment at the Contract price for the above tender item shall be full compensation for all labour, Equipment, and Material to do the work.

### **401.10.03 Rock Excavation for Trenches**

Payment for rock excavation for trenches shall be according to OPSS 403.