



Public Works Department

Standards for Preliminary Exploratory Excavation

Background

As part of a Tree Impact Assessment response, the Urban Forest Manager may require a Preliminary Exploratory Excavation as a condition for approving a Tree Protection Plan. This is for cases where a project proposes to excavate and destroy roots at a concerning proximity to a tree. The exploratory excavation should uncover the location, quantity, and size of a tree's major roots and serve to provide reasonable guarantee that major roots will not be lost during the completion of the proposed project.

Standards

- The Preliminary Exploratory Excavation should only be conducted after written approval from the Urban Forest Manager.
- The method of excavation must preserve all roots over 0.5" diameter. The preferred method is to use a Supersonic Air Tool (SSAT), also commonly referred to as an Air Spade.
- The depth of exploratory excavation should be at least two feet or to the depth of the proposed excavation, whichever is less. In some cases where structural roots of larger trees are expected to grow deeper, exploratory excavation to a depth of three feet may be recommended.
- The location, size, and number of all roots over 0.5" diameter must be documented by photographs and numerical data collection. Thorough documentation is very important as this is what may be used to justify the proposed project. You may benefit from a professional arborist preparing a report using the data and photographs collected.

Next Steps

A Preliminary Exploratory Excavation may help determine that:

- the proposed project will not have an excessive impact to tree roots.
- the proposed project may be workable with modifications.
- the proposed project is not compatible with tree preservation.

The photos, data, and/or report produced should be included as a supplemental document for your Tree Protection Plan Permit Application.

Please contact the Urban Forest Manager with any questions.

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