Street Works UK: Material Classification Protocol

This document sets out what the newly approved Street Works UK material classification protocol is and provides guidance and examples.

Who are Street Works UK?

Street Works UK is the trade association representing utilities and their contractors on all street works issues. Our membership comprises around 70 companies across all five utilities: water, wastewater, gas, electricity and telecoms/broadband. Our members include leading utility companies like Cadent Gas, United Utilities, National Grid, Virgin Media O2 and Openreach, with strong representation also within the devolved nations. On average the annual collective capital investment by our members in the UK is £14 billion.

Why the change in how utilities classify excavated waste material

The Environment Agency requires all excavated waste to be classified before disposal / treatment. Utilities have been able to do this in two ways previously, unplannned works followed RPS 211 and Planned works followed WM3. A solution was required to better deal with waste generated from unplanned works and the Environment Agency were open to Street Works UK proposing a solution that would work for its members. A risk assessment based approached was trialled by Street Works UK members and approved by the Environment Agency for use to classify excavated waste for qualifying work.

1. Qualification to use the protocol

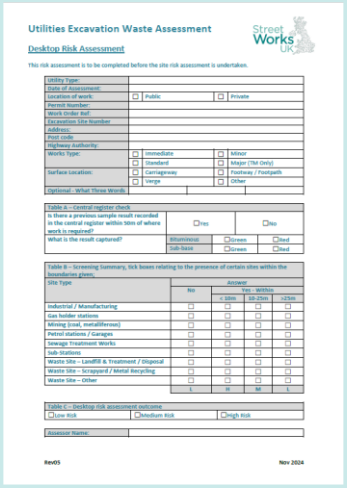
The following works qualify for use of the protocol.

- **Immediate Urgent**
- **Immediate Emergency**
- **Minor**
- **Standard**
- **Major Works when the permit/notice is only required due to Traffic Management purposes***
- **Or equivalent notice periods for works on private land**

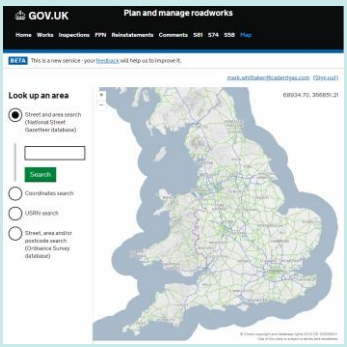
* Major Works for traffic management purposes only relate to works that would take less than 10 days duration but a 'Major Works' permit is required due to the disruption to road users because of the works e.g. a road closure to repair an asset in the centre of a road.

2. Desktop Risk Assessment

Only version-controlled desktop risk assessments are to be used to ensure all users are completing the same question sets thus providing consistency across the country. A trained party completes the desktop risk assessment aligned with any company waste classification procedures. To aid completion, Street Manager holds a central register of known results which will continually be updated with results from any UKAS material classification testing.

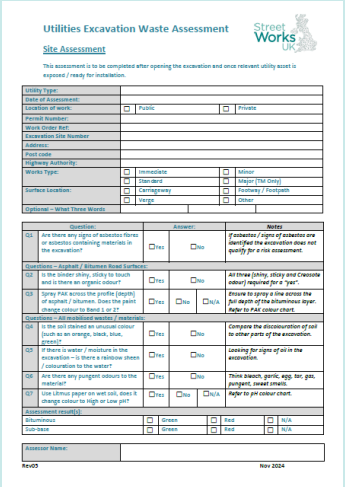

Utilities Excavation Waste Assessment

Desktop Risk Assessment

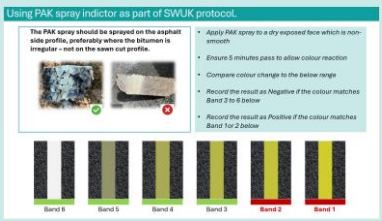


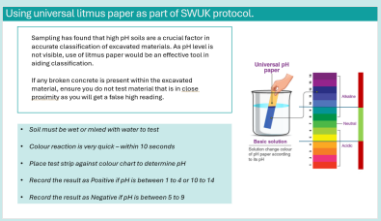
3. Site Assessment

Only version-controlled site assessments are to be used to ensure all users are completing the same question sets thus providing consistency across the country. A trained party completes the site assessment aligned with any company waste classification procedures. Each Bituminous and Sub-base layer needs to be segregated and assessed individually on site. The use of PAK spray and Litmus paper indicators are encouraged but not mandatory. If any questions are answered 'Yes', the classification outcome should be Red for the material being assessed. Refer to guidance documents when assessing PAK and Litmus results.


Utilities Excavation Waste Assessment

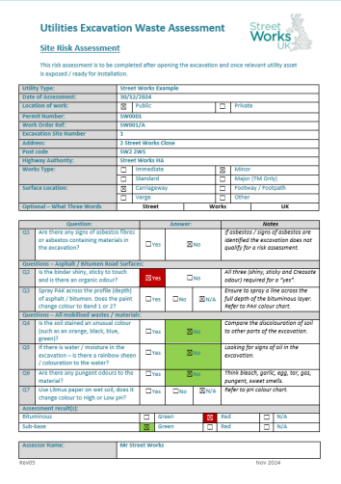
Site Assessment



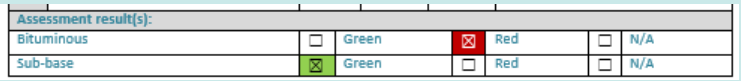


4. Waste Movement

The excavated waste material is ready for collection once the site assessment has been completed and the material(s) classified. Information on material classification must be shared with those collecting the material to ensure Red and Green classified materials continue to be segregated from one another during transfer to a location where it will be managed (or treated).


Utilities Excavation Waste Assessment

Site Risk Assessment

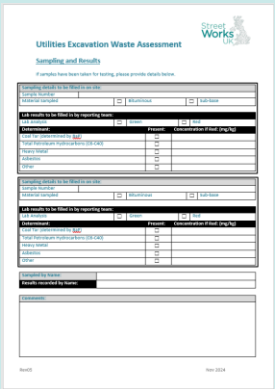


Assessment result(s):						
Bituminous	☐	Green	☒	Red	☐	N/A
Sub-base	☒	Green	☐	Red	☐	N/A

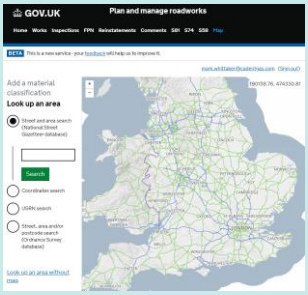
5. Sampling

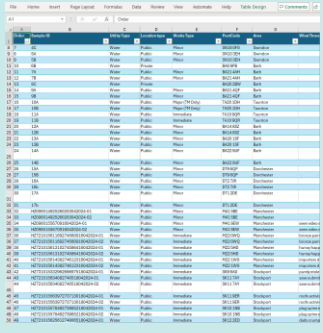
A percentage of work needs to be sampled to continually check the accuracy of the protocol. Samples should be taken from segregated materials as per procedures used in SWUK Phase 3 trial (refer to sampling guidance). Frequency of sampling will start at 1% for all users and is subject to change based on accuracy performance of individual organisations each year. Results of sampling must be uploaded to the central register in Street Manager and recorded in your SWUK sampling results log. Results logs should be returned to SWUK every quarter to info@streetworks.org.uk, mark the subject of the email as "**Sample Return**".

Volumes of testing will be assessed at the end of each calendar year and new sampling frequency assigned based on accuracy performance, >93% accuracy = 1% sampling, 85-92.99% accuracy = 2% sampling and <85% accuracy = 3% sampling.


Utilities Excavation Waste Assessment

Sampling and Results





Sample Banding		
	>93%	1.0%
	85-92.99%	2.0%
	<85%	3.0%

6. Results / Performance

UKAS Results from any sampling must be uploaded into Street Managers central register. All sample results must also be added to your SWUK results log, along with the supporting assessment outcomes and details of the lab analysis including any concentrations of hazards found. Results logs must be returned to SWUK every quarter to allow accuracy of the protocol to be measured and performance shared with the EA.

Performance will be monitored by the EA and any organisations having two combined quarters back-to-back in the Red zone will be suspended from using the protocol until they can demonstrate they can perform at the required level of accuracy. Green = >80% accuracy, Amber = 70%-79.99% accuracy and Red = <70% accuracy.

Performance Banding	
	>80%
	>70-79.99%
	<70%

2025 Q4, 2026 Q1 Combined		2026 Q1, Q2 Combined	
Q1 EA Review	Q1 Volume of Samples	Q2 EA Review	Q2 Volume of Samples
70.0%	10	66.7%	9
70.0%	10	70.0%	10
68.8%	64	75.4%	65
66.7%	9	66.7%	9
66.7%	9	77.8%	9
60.0%	10	90.0%	10
60.0%	10	60.0%	10
60.0%	10	77.8%	9
60.0%	10	50.0%	10

Description of file	Document Number	Document
Desktop Risk Assessment	DRA1	https://streetworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/DRA1_SWUK_Desktop_Risk_Assessment-29.11.2024.pdf
Site Assessment	SRA1	https://streetworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/SRA1_SWUK_-Site_Assessment-29.11.2024.pdf
Sampling Requirements	SR1	https://streetworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/SR1_SWUK_Sampling_Requirements-11.12.2024.pdf
Quarterly Results Log	QRL1	http://streetworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/QRL1_SWUK_-Results_Capture-20.12.2024.xlsx
PAK testing guidance	PAK1	https://streetworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/PAK1_SWUK_PAK_Guidance-21.01.2025.pdf
Litmus testing guidance	LIT1	https://streetworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/LIT1_SWUK_Litmus_Guidance-21.01.2025.pdf
Reporting calendar	EAT1	https://streetworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/EAT1_SWUK_Reporting-Timeline-10.01.2024.pdf