NEW BRUNSWICK EXCAVATION

Water & Sewer Trenching

Trenches for water services, sewer laterals and lines to wells, tanks and outbuildings

4 Expert Answers from Dig IQ

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Q1

Running a water line to a barn on a Sussex property, where to start?

Running a Water Line to a Barn in Sussex

Start with locates and permits before anything else, because the order matters as much as the dig itself. Several steps have to happen in the right sequence.

Locates first. Info-Excavation, reached through Click Before You Dig, needs three working days' notice before digging starts; the locate is valid until the end date written on your request. NB Power runs its own separate underground locate service and asks for at least five business days' notice; that locate is valid for 60 days from the date on the locate form and covers only NB Power-owned underground power lines. Any wiring a past owner ran to the barn, a shed, a pump or a fence energizer is yours to find and mark before the machine moves. Ask the contractor to show you both locate tickets before work begins.

Permits. We found no excavation-specific rule for Sussex, so ask the Town of Sussex directly whether a trench from the house to a barn needs a building or development permit, and whether tapping into the water supply triggers any connection approval. Regulation 2021-2 exempts an accessory building of 55 square metres or less that is not intended for overnight accommodation from the building permit requirement, but local by-laws can still require a development permit. Check with the Town before assuming the exemption applies.

WAWA. If the trench runs within 30 metres of a watercourse or wetland, measured horizontally from the top of the bank, you need a Watercourse and Wetland Alteration permit from the province before any digging, clearing or machine work in that zone. The fee for a single alteration is $25. Measure in the field, not from a map.

Trench safety. WorkSafeNB's General Regulation 91-191 requires that any trench 1.2 m (about 4 ft) or deeper that workers enter be shored, sloped or benched, or cut in solid rock, and shoring must be engineer-certified. Nobody should enter the trench, and nobody should stand close to the edge. The employer, meaning the contractor, carries these obligations; ask how they plan to handle depth and wall support on your lot.

What a fair quote covers. For a rural water-line trench, ask the contractor how they price rock if they hit it: a hydraulic breaker on an excavator runs $200 to $300 per hour based on published price guides read in September 2026, and that is separate from the machine rate of $65 to $150 per hour for a mini-excavator or $150 to $250 per hour for a standard machine. Few New Brunswick trench prices are published by the metre or foot, so machine time is the clearest number to compare between quotes. Confirm the quote includes backfill compaction, what happens to the spoil, and whether the contractor handles reinstatement of any surface disturbed along the route.

WorkSafeNB clearance. Ask the contractor for a WorkSafeNB clearance certificate before work starts; it confirms they are registered and in good standing. Under the Construction Remedies Act, you must retain 10% of the contract price as a holdback for 60 days after substantial performance.

Before the machine arrives, book both locate requests, and call the Town of Sussex to confirm whether a permit is needed for the trench or the water connection.

Q2

Trench for a new sewer connection keeps caving in Fredericton, why?

Why a Sewer Trench Keeps Caving In

A trench that collapses repeatedly is a serious safety situation. Everyone should stay out of it and back from the edges until the cause is identified and the walls are properly stabilised. That is not a judgment call: WorkSafeNB's General Regulation 91-191 requires that any trench 1.2 m (about 4 ft) or deeper that workers need to enter must be shored, sloped or benched, or cut in solid rock, and any shoring must be certified as adequate by an engineer. Ask the contractor how the walls are being supported.

What causes caving has to be judged on site by the contractor or an engineer, because ground conditions vary from lot to lot and cannot be assessed from a description. Factors a contractor will look at include how the walls were cut, whether the trench is deep enough to require support under the WorkSafeNB rule, whether water is entering the trench (the regulation requires it to be kept reasonably free of water), and whether excavated material has been kept at least 1.2 m from the edge as the regulation requires. Regulation 91-191 also requires that loose material be removed before anyone enters, and that a ladder extending at least 1 m above the top be within 15 m of where a worker is.

On the permit and inspection side, the City of Fredericton requires a building permit before new work begins, and the City's Engineering Division reviews water and sewer services at the permit stage. New water and sewer services in Fredericton are installed by the City's Water and Sewer Division, so ask the City directly how the connection is being arranged and who is responsible for which part of the trench. Regulation 2021-2 under the Building Code Administration Act requires a footing and foundation inspection before any backfilling begins on a new build; ask the City's building department how inspections are booked for your project.

Before any digging continues, confirm that both locate requests were made: Info-Excavation through Click Before You Dig (three working days' notice, valid until the end date on the request) and NB Power's separate underground locate service (five business days' notice, valid for 60 days from the date on the locate form, covering only NB

Power-owned lines). Any private lines, drains or tanks a past owner installed are the owner's to find and mark. Under Regulation 91-191, the employer must determine the location of underground utilities before beginning an excavation, and must notify the operating authority and follow an adequate procedure within 600 mm of any line.

Ask the contractor to show you the engineer's certification for any shoring being used, and ask how they plan to keep the trench free of water while work continues. The contractor should also carry a WorkSafeNB clearance certificate confirming their account is in good standing. Under the Construction Remedies Act, you must retain a holdback of 10% of the contract price for 60 days after substantial performance.

Because the trench is actively failing, the right first call is to the contractor to stop work and assess the walls, and then to the City of Fredericton's building and engineering offices to confirm what permits, inspections and City-side responsibilities apply to your connection.

Q3

Replacing a water line under a paved driveway in Riverview?

Replacing a water line under a paved driveway in Riverview means cutting through asphalt, trenching to the pipe, and then backfilling and repaving. Machine time is the best-published figure for this kind of work: a mini excavator with operator runs $65 to $150 per hour and a standard excavator with operator runs $150 to $250 per hour, based on published price guides read in September 2026. Few New Brunswick prices for trenching per foot are published, so the quote you receive will be built from machine hours, trucking, backfill material and surface restoration.

Several things move the price on a driveway water-line job. The depth of the existing pipe matters because a deeper trench takes longer to open and close. The length of the run under the driveway determines how much asphalt has to be cut and how much backfill is needed. Soil conditions affect how quickly the machine works. If the contractor hits rock, a hydraulic breaker attachment runs $200 to $300 per hour, and that cost should be spelled out in the quote before work starts, not added as a surprise afterward. Trucking distance for spoil and the cost of new backfill material are also part of the real number.

Locates, permits and Riverview rules

Before any digging, two separate locate requests are needed. Info-Excavation, reached through Click Before You Dig, requires three working days' notice; that locate is valid until the end date written on the request. NB Power runs its own separate underground locate service and asks for at least five business days' notice; that locate is valid for 60 days from the date on the locate form and covers only NB Power-owned underground power lines. Private lines, including any wiring run to a garage or shed, are the property owner's responsibility to find and mark before the

machine arrives. Whether Info-Excavation covers municipal water and sewer lines was not confirmed, so ask your municipality directly.

For permits in Riverview, Plan 360 (the Southeast Regional Service Commission) issues building permits for construction, renovation and demolition, and a permit may be required to tap into water and sewer mains. Check with Plan 360 before work starts to confirm what approvals apply to a water-line replacement under a private driveway. If the driveway is within 30 metres of a watercourse or wetland, a Watercourse and Wetland Alteration permit from the province is required before any machine work or ground disturbance begins.

WorkSafeNB's General Regulation 91-191 requires that any trench 1.2 m (about 4 ft) or deeper that workers enter be shored, sloped or benched, or cut in solid rock, and shoring must be engineer-certified. Stay back from the edge of any open trench.

A fair quote for this job names the machine rate, how rock is priced if encountered, trucking and disposal, backfill material, asphalt cutting and surface restoration, and a timeline. Ask for a WorkSafeNB clearance certificate before signing. Under the Construction Remedies Act, hold back 10% of the contract price for 60 days after the certificate of substantial performance is signed.

Before you commit, ask the contractor directly who is responsible for marking private lines on your property and what their process is if the dig uncovers something that was never located.

Q4

Replacing an old water service to the street in Saint John, what permit?

Replacing a Water Service Line in Saint John

For a water service renewal in Saint John, the City requires a Water and Sewerage Permit Package for all new, renewal or repair water, sanitary or storm sewer installations. That permit package is your starting point before any trench is opened. A Street Excavation permit is also listed among the City's street and sidewalk permits, so ask the City of Saint John's permitting office which of the two your job needs.

Before the machine arrives, two separate locate requests are needed. Info-Excavation, reached through Click Before You Dig, needs at least three working days' notice; the locate is valid until the end date written on your request. NB Power runs its own underground locate service, separate from Info-Excavation, and asks for at least five business days' notice; that locate is valid for 60 days from the date on the locate form and covers only NB Power-owned lines. Private lines, such as a wire run to a garage or a fuel line a past owner buried, are yours to find and mark before digging starts. Whether Info-Excavation covers the municipal water and sewer mains themselves was not confirmed, so ask the City directly when you apply for the permit.

A few other things shape this job. WorkSafeNB's General Regulation 91-191 requires that a trench 1.2 m (about 4 ft) or deeper that workers enter be shored, sloped or benched, or cut in solid rock, and any shoring must be engineer-certified. Excavated material must be kept at least 1.2 m from the trench edge. If the trench runs within 30 metres of a watercourse or wetland, a Watercourse and Wetland Alteration permit from the province is required before any digging or machine work begins. We found no provincial licence specific to excavation contractors, so ask any contractor you hire for a WorkSafeNB clearance certificate confirming they are in good standing with their workers' compensation account.

A fair quote for this work should spell out:

- which permits the contractor will pull versus which ones you carry
- how rock, if encountered, is priced (hydraulic breaker time runs $200 to $300 per hour on published guides)
- trucking distance for spoil removal and whether clean backfill is included
- who is responsible for street restoration after the trench is closed

Under the Construction Remedies Act, hold back 10% of the contract price for 60 days after substantial performance; get legal advice if the contract is large or complicated.
Start with the City of Saint John's permitting office, because the Water and Sewerage Permit Package and any Street Excavation permit set the conditions the contractor has to work within, and knowing those requirements

before you get quotes means the numbers you receive will reflect the actual scope of the job.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by New Brunswick Excavation. It does not constitute professional advice. Always book your locates, check with your municipality or Regional Service Commission, and follow WorkSafeNB rules before starting any excavation project. Information is current as of November 15, 2026 and may change. Visit **newbrunswickexcavation.com** for the latest answers.