



**Town of Tyngsborough**  
**Building Department**  
 25 Bryants Lane  
 Tyngsborough, Massachusetts 01879  
 Office: (978) 649-2300 Ext. 112  
 Fax # 978-649-2301

Permit Number \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date Issued \_\_\_\_\_  
 Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

**TRENCH PERMIT**  
 Pursuant to G.L. c. 82A §1 and 520 CMR 7.00 et seq.(as amended)

**THIS PERMIT MUST BE FULLY COMPLETED PRIOR TO CONSIDERATION**

Name of Applicant			Phone		Cell	
Street Address						
City/Town		MA	ZIP			
Name of Excavator (if different from applicant)			Phone		Cell	
Street Address						
City/Town		MA	ZIP			
Name of Owner(s) of Property			Phone		Cell	
Street Address						
City/Town		MA	ZIP			
Other Contact			Permit Fee Received No ( ) Yes ( )			
<b>Description, location and purpose of proposed trench:</b> Please describe the exact location of the proposed trench and its purpose (include a description of what is (or is intended) to be laid in proposed trench (eg; pipes/cable lines etc..) Please use reverse side if additional space is needed.						
Insurance Certificate #:						
Name and Contact Information of Insurer:						
Policy Expiration Date:						
Dig Safe #:						
Name of Competent Person (as defined by 520 CMR 7.02):						

Massachusetts Hoisting License #

License Grade:

Expiration Date:

BY SIGNING THIS FORM, THE APPLICANT, OWNER, AND EXCAVATOR ALL ACKNOWLEDGE AND CERTIFY THAT THEY ARE FAMILIAR WITH, OR, BEFORE COMMENCEMENT OF THE WORK, WILL BECOME FAMILIAR WITH, ALL LAWS AND REGULATIONS APPLICABLE TO WORK PROPOSED, INCLUDING OSHA REGULATIONS, G.L. c. 82A, 520 CMR 7.00 et seq., AND ANY APPLICABLE MUNICIPAL ORDINANCES, BY-LAWS AND REGULATIONS AND THEY COVENANT AND AGREE THAT ALL WORK DONE UNDER THE PERMIT ISSUED FOR SUCH WORK WILL COMPLY THEREWITH IN ALL RESPECTS AND WITH THE CONDITIONS SET FORTH BELOW.

THE UNDERSIGNED OWNER AUTHORIZES THE APPLICANT TO APPLY FOR THE PERMIT AND THE EXCAVATOR TO UNDERTAKE SUCH WORK ON THE PROPERTY OF THE OWNER, AND ALSO, FOR THE DURATION OF CONSTRUCTION, AUTHORIZES PERSONS DULY APPOINTED BY THE MUNICIPALITY TO ENTER UPON THE PROPERTY TO MONITOR AND INSPECT THE WORK FOR CONFORMITY WITH THE CONDITIONS ATTACHED HERETO AND THE LAWS AND REGULATIONS GOVERING SUCH WORK.

THE UNDERSIGNED APPLICANT, OWNER AND EXCAVATOR AGREE JOINTLY AND SEVERALLY TO REIMBURSE THE MUNICIPALITY FOR ANY AND ALL COSTS AND EXPENSES INCURRED BY THE MUNICIPALITY IN CONNECTION WITH THIS PERMIT AND THE WORK CONDUCTED THEREUNDER, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO ENFORCING THE REQUIREMENTS OF STATE LAW AND CONDITIONS OF THIS PERMIT, INSPECTIONS MADE TO ASSURE COMPLIANCE THEREWITH, AND MEASURES TAKEN BY THE MUNICIPALITY TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC WHERE THE APPLICANT OWNER OR EXCAVATOR HAS FAILED TO COMPLY THEREWITH INCLUDING POLICE DETAILS AND OTHER REMEDIAL MEASURES DEEMED NECESSARY BY THE MUNICIPALITY.

THE UNDERSIGNED APPLICANT, OWNER AND EXCAVATOR AGREE JOINTLY AND SEVERALLY TO DEFEND, INDEMNIFY, AND HOLD HARMLESS THE MUNICIPALITY AND ALL OF ITS AGENTS AND EMPLOYEES FROM ANY AND ALL LIABILITY, CAUSES OR ACTION, COSTS, AND EXPENSES RESULTING FROM OR ARISING OUT OF ANY INJURY, DEATH, LOSS, OR DAMAGE TO ANY PERSON OR PROPERTY DURING THE WORK CONDUCTED UNDER THIS PERMIT.

APPLICANT SIGNATURE

**Permit Fee**

\_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**\$2.00 per Linear Foot**

EXCAVATOR SIGNATURE (IF DIFFERENT)

**\$25.00 Minimum**

\_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

OWNER'S SIGNATURE (IF DIFFERENT)

**\$100.00 Maximum**

\_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

For City/Town use - Do not write in this section	
PERMIT APPROVED BY	\$ _____ Application Fee
PERMITTING AUTHORITY	
CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL	

**CONDITIONS AND REQUIREMENTS PURSUANT TO G.L.C.82A AND 520 CMR 7.00 et seq. (as amended)**

By signing the application, the applicant understands and agrees to comply with the following:

- i. No trench may be excavated unless the requirements of sections 40 through 40D of chapter 82, and any accompanying regulations, have been met and this permit is invalid unless and until said requirements have been complied with by the excavator applying for the permit including, but not limited to, the establishment of a valid excavation number with the underground plant damage prevention system as said system is defined in section 76D of chapter 164 (DIG SAFE);
- ii. Trenches may pose a significant health and safety hazard. Pursuant to Section 1 of Chapter 82A of the General Laws, an excavator shall not leave any open trench unattended without first making every reasonable effort to eliminate any recognized safety hazard that may exist as a result of leaving said open trench unattended. Excavators should consult regulations promulgated by the Department of Public Safety in order to familiarize themselves with the recognized safety hazards associated with excavations and open trenches and the procedures required or recommended by said department in order to make every reasonable effort to eliminate said safety hazards which may include covering, barricading or otherwise protecting open trenches from accidental entry.
- iii. Persons engaging in any in any trenching operation shall familiarize themselves with the federal safety standards promulgated by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration on excavations: 29 CFR 1926.650 et.seq., entitled Subpart P "Excavations".
- iv. Excavators engaging in any trenching operation who utilize hoisting or other mechanical equipment subject to chapter 146 shall only employ individuals licensed to operate said equipment by the Department of Public Safety pursuant to said chapter and this permit must be presented to said licensed operator before any excavation is commenced;
- v. By applying for, accepting and signing this permit, the applicant hereby attests to the following: (1) that he has read and understands the regulations promulgated by the Department of Public Safety with regard to construction related excavations and trench safety; (2) that he has read and understands the federal safety standards promulgated by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration on excavations: 29 CMR 1926.650 et.seq., entitled Subpart P "Excavations" as well as any other excavation requirements established by this municipality; and (3) that he is aware of and has, with regard to the proposed trench excavation on private property or proposed excavation of a city or town public way that forms the basis of the permit application, complied with the requirements of sections 40-40D of chapter 82.
- vi. This permit shall be posted in plain view on the site of the trench.

For additional information please visit the Department of Public Safety's website at [www.mass.gov/dps](http://www.mass.gov/dps)

## Summary of Excavation and Trench Safety Regulation (520 CMR 14.00 et seq.)

This summary was prepared by the Massachusetts Department of Public Safety pursuant to G.L.c.82A and does not include all requirements of the 520 CMR 14.00. To view the full regulation and G.L.c.82A, go to [www.mass.gov/dps](http://www.mass.gov/dps). Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 82A, § 1, the Department of Public Safety, jointly with the Division of Occupational Safety, drafted regulations relative to trench safety. The regulation is codified in section 14.00 of title 520 of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations. The regulation requires all excavators to obtain a permit prior to the excavation of a trench made for a construction-related purpose on public or private land or rights-of-way. All municipalities must establish a local permitting authority for the purpose of issuing permits for trenches within their municipality. Trenches on land owned or controlled by a public (state) agency requires a permit to be issued by that public agency unless otherwise designated.

In addition to the permitting requirements mandated by statute, the trench safety regulations require that all excavators, whether public or private, take specific precautions to protect the general public and prevent unauthorized access to unattended trenches. Accordingly, unattended trenches must be covered, barricaded or backfilled. Covers must be road plates at least ¾" thick or equivalent; barricades must be fences at least 6' high with no openings greater than 4" between vertical supports; backfilling must be sufficient to eliminate the trench. Alternatively, excavators may choose to attend trenches at all times, for instance by hiring a police detail, security guard or other attendant who will be present during times when the trench will be unattended by the excavator.

The regulations further provide that local permitting authorities, the Department of Public Safety, or the Division of Occupational Safety may order an immediate shutdown of a trench in the event of a death or serious injury; the failure to obtain a permit; or the failure to implement or effectively use adequate protections for the general public. The trench shall remain shutdown until re-inspected and authorized to re-open provided, however, that excavators shall have the right to appeal an immediate shutdown. Permitting authorities are further authorized to suspend or revoke a permit following a hearing. Excavators may also be subject to administrative fines issued by the Department of Public Safety for identified violations.

## Summary of 1926 CFR Subpart P -OSHA Excavation Standard

This is a worker protection standard, and is designed to protect employees who are working inside a trench. This summary was prepared by the Massachusetts Division of Occupational Safety and not OSHA for informational purposes only and does not constitute an official interpretation by OSHA of their regulations, and may not include all aspects of the standard. For further information or a full copy of the standard go to [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov).

- **Trench Definition per the OSHA standard:**
  - An excavation made below the surface of the ground, narrow in relation to its length.
  - In general, the depth is greater than the width, but the width of the trench is not greater than fifteen feet.
- **Protective Systems** to prevent soil wall collapse are always required in trenches deeper than 5', and are also required in trenches less than 5' deep when the competent person determines that a hazard exists. Protection options include:
  - Shoring. Shoring must be used in accordance with the OSHA Excavation standard appendices, the equipment manufacturer's tabulated data, or designed by a registered professional engineer.
  - Shielding (Trench Boxes). Trench boxes must be used in accordance with the equipment manufacturer's tabulated data, or a registered professional engineer.
  - Sloping or Benching. In Type C soils (what is most typically encountered) the excavation must extend horizontally 1 ½ feet for every foot of trench depth on both sides, 1 foot for Type B soils, and ¼ foot for Type A soils.
  - A registered professional engineer must design protective systems for all excavations greater than 20' in depth.
- **Ladders** must be used in trenches deeper than 4'.
  - Ladders must be inside the trench with workers at all times, and located within 25' of unobstructed lateral travel for every worker in the trench.
  - Ladders must extend 3' above the top of the trench so workers can safely get onto and off of the ladder.
- **Inspections** of every trench worksite are required:
  - Prior to the start of each shift, and again when there is a change in conditions such as a rainstorm.
  - Inspections must be conducted by the competent person (see below).
- **Competent Person(s)** is:
  - Capable (i.e., trained and knowledgeable) in identifying existing and predictable hazards in the trench, and other working conditions which may pose a hazard to workers, and
  - Authorized by management to take necessary corrective action to eliminate the hazards. Employees must be removed from hazardous areas until the hazard has been corrected.
- **Underground Utilities** must be:
  - Identified prior to opening the excavation (e.g., contact Digsafe).
  - Located by safe and acceptable means while excavating.
  - Protected, supported, or removed once exposed.
- **Spoils** must be kept back a minimum of 2' from the edge of the trench.
- **Surface Encumbrances** creating a hazard must be removed or supported to safeguard employees. Keep heavy equipment and heavy material as far back from the edge of the trench as possible.
- **Stability of Adjacent Structures:**
  - Where the stability of adjacent structures is endangered by creation of the trench, they must be underpinned, braced, or otherwise supported.
  - Sidewalks, pavements, etc. shall not be undermined unless a support system or other method of protection is provided.
- **Protection from water accumulation hazards:**
  - It is not allowable for employees to work in trenches with accumulated water. If water control such as pumping is used to prevent water accumulation, this must be monitored by the competent person.
  - If the trench interrupts natural drainage of surface water, ditches, dikes or other means must be used to prevent this water from entering the excavation.
- **Additional Requirements:**
  - For mobile equipment operated near the edge of the trench, a warning system such as barricades or stop logs must be used.
  - Employees are not permitted to work underneath loads. Operators may not remain in vehicles being loaded unless vehicles are equipped with adequate protection as per 1926.601(b)(6).
  - Employees must wear high-visibility clothing in traffic work zones.
  - Air monitoring must be conducted in trenches deeper than 4' if the potential for a hazardous atmosphere exists. If a hazardous atmosphere is found to exist (e.g., O<sub>2</sub> <19.5% or >23.5%, 20% LEL, specific chemical hazard), adequate protections shall be taken such as ventilation of the space.
  - Walkways are required where employees must cross over the trench. Walkways with guardrails must be provided for crossing over trenches > 6' deep.
  - Employees must be protected from loose rock or soil through protections such as scaling or protective barricades.

The Official Website of the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS)

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[Home](#) > [Consumer Protection & Business Licensing](#) > [License Type by Business Area](#) > [Trenches](#) >

SEARCH

Public Safety

Search

## Trenches FAQs

### Questions

1. [What do the Trench Safety Regulations \(520 CMR 14.00\) require?](#)
2. [What is a trench?](#)
3. [Why do the regulations require a permit to create a trench?](#)
4. [What is a permitting authority?](#)
5. [I am an excavator. Where may I obtain a permit and what is required?](#)
6. [May permitting authorities charge fees for trench permits?](#)
7. [Can permitting authorities impose time restrictions on issuing permits, such as requiring applicants to apply for the permit at least three days prior the planned excavation?](#)
8. [Are excavators expected to obtain a permit before responding to an emergency, such as a water main break?](#)
9. [I own a large construction company that frequently performs large jobs and may use multiple sub-contractors. I don't always know who the individual operating the excavation equipment or competent person will be at any one time on a complex project that may take several weeks or more, so how am I supposed to complete the permit application?](#)
10. [What are the permitting requirements if I am creating a trench for a project that crosses municipal lines or jurisdictional lines, such as from state-owned land onto private property?](#)
11. [What is a competent person and who on the excavation crew should this person be?](#)
12. [What are municipalities and public agencies required to do under the trench regulations?](#)
13. [What are the safety precautions that I must take as an excavator?](#)
14. [I own a private construction company that already adheres to the OSHA requirements for protecting my employees' safety when they work in trenches. Aren't these Trench Safety regulations redundant?](#)
15. [Is a trench permit required for cemetery burials?](#)
16. [Is a trench permit required for farms?](#)
17. [What action, if any, may a permitting authority take if it finds a violation of 520 CMR 14.00?](#)

### Answers

#### *Q. What do the Trench Safety Regulations (520 CMR 14.00) require?*

A. Generally, the Trench Safety Regulations require that *unattended* trenches be made safe for the General Public. Pursuant to the regulations enabling statute, MGL c. 82A, the Trench Safety Regulations, included in 520 CMR 14.00, require excavators to obtain a permit prior to creating a trench on public or private property; require excavators to undertake certain safety precautions to make unattended trenches safe for the general public and prevent unauthorized access; and subject excavators to penalties, including fines, for the failure to comply with the regulations. An "unattended trench" is defined as "a trench where neither the permit holder, excavator, or any of the people who

work in or at the trench are present. It is important to note that these regulations require action to be taken by permit holders ahead of time to secure unattended trenches. These regulations do not prescribe worker safety regulations for employees in or at trenches, nor are the regulations intended to protect the general public from hazards inherent in trenches while the trenches are attended.

[Back to Top](#)

### *Q. What is a trench?*

A. According to MGL c. 82A, §4 and 520 CMR 14.02, a trench is defined as "an excavation which is narrow in relation to its length, made below the surface ground in excess of three feet below grade and the depth of which is, in general, greater than the width, but the width of the trench, as measured at the bottom, is not greater than 15 feet." It is important to note that this definition differs from the definition of "trench" included in the OSHA Regulation 1926 Subpart P—Excavations. Below, please find a side-by-side comparison of the definitions for what constitutes a trench and what the different regulations require when a trench exists:

OSHA Regulation 1926 Subpart P—Excavations	520 CMR 14.02
Protective systems not required for excavations less than 5' in depth (1926.652)	General Public protections not required when excavations are less than 3' below grade or the depth is less than the width
A trench may consist completely of soil walls or may consist of a soil wall and another barrier, such as the wall of a placed foundation.	A trench is composed wholly of soil walls for purposes of this regulation, including permitting; the placement of a foundation implies the necessity of a building permit and adherence to the State Building Code, which incorporates many of the same or similar protections for the General Public.
Requires the use of a "protective system" such as trench boxes or shoring to protect employees from cave-ins which may result in injuries or death.	Requires a permit and the implementation of protections to protect the General Public from unauthorized access to trenches, which may result in injuries or death.

[Back to Top](#)

### *Q. Why do the regulations require a permit to create a trench?*

A. The regulations require excavators to obtain a permit because the statute requires excavators to obtain permit. See MGL c. 82A, §2. The permit ensures that the city, town or public agency is aware of trenches being created within its jurisdiction and also ensures that excavators are put on notice with regard to the safety requirements for trenches because permitting authorities are required to attach summaries of OSHA Regulation 1926 Subpart P-Excavations and the Excavation and Trench Safety Regulations included at 520 CMR 14.00, passed pursuant to MGL c. 82A.

[Back to Top](#)

### *Q. What is a permitting authority?*

A. A permitting authority is defined within the regulations as "a city, town or public agency required to administer the provisions of 520 CMR 14.03 [Permitting Requirements]." The statute, MGL c. 82A, §2, states that "each city, town, or public agency shall designate 1 board or officer to issue permits for the excavation of trenches on privately owned land and for the excavation of a public way of a city or town." Under Article 89 of the Massachusetts Constitution, municipalities may choose to enact a by-law or regulation designating the board or officer that will act as the permitting authority for that city or town. While there are no prerequisites for designation as the permitting authority, the Department of Public Safety and the Division of Occupational Safety recommend the delegation to an individual or

## ***responding to an emergency, such as a water main break?***

A. NO. Permits are not required prior to creating a trench in response to an emergency. "Emergency" is defined in 520 CMR 14.02 as "an unforeseen condition in which the safety of the public is in imminent danger because of a threat to life or health or where immediate correction is required to maintain or restore essential public utility service." However, the excavator should complete a permit application with the permitting authority by the next business day, at the latest.

[Back to Top](#)

## ***Q. I own a large construction company that frequently performs large jobs and may use multiple sub-contractors. I don't always know who the individual operating the excavation equipment or competent person will be at any one time on a complex project that may take several weeks or more, so how am I supposed to complete the permit application?***

A. The Department of Public Safety and Division of Occupational Safety anticipate that the scope may vary from project to project. Accordingly, the permitting authority should realize that the specific competent person and person performing the excavation may change on complex projects. Therefore, information may be updated as necessary during the course of the project, provided however, that by pulling the permit, the permit holder impliedly agrees to act reasonably to ensure that up-to-date information is provided to the permitting authority.

[Back to Top](#)

## ***Q. What are the permitting requirements if I am creating a trench for a project that crosses municipal lines or jurisdictional lines, such as from state-owned land onto private property?***

A. You must obtain a permit from each relevant permitting authority.

[Back to Top](#)

## ***Q. What is a competent person and who on the excavation crew should this person be?***

A. A "competent person" is defined in the regulations as: "A person or persons who is capable of identifying existing and predictable hazards in the surroundings, or working conditions which are unsanitary, hazardous, or dangerous to people, and who has authorization to take prompt corrective measures to eliminate them. A competent person must be able to demonstrate that he or she has been trained in and is knowledgeable about: soil analysis, the use of protections for the General Public and the requirements of this regulation." The first sentence of the definition is taken directly from OSHA's regulations.

The competent person should be an individual who is well-versed in the procedures for reporting problems and knows where to obtain assistance to take corrective action. The Division of Occupational Safety, the agency responsible for oversight of worker safety in the Commonwealth, recommends that the competent person at a trench worksite be an individual that holds a Massachusetts hoisting license because this individual must already be familiar with the laws relevant to excavations, including the pertinent state and federal regulations.

[Back to Top](#)

*Q. What are municipalities and public agencies required to do under the trench regulations?*

A. Municipalities and public agencies are required to 1) establish a permitting authority; 2) require permits for the creation of a trench on a public way, public property, or private property located within the municipality; 3) shut down trenches where violations are found; and 4) regulate municipal departments that create trenches. Municipalities or public agencies that act as excavators are not exempt from these regulations and must adhere to the same standards for obtaining a permit and implementing protections for the General Public required of other excavators. Municipalities and state agencies are not required to inspect trenches and excavators are not required to "pass" a municipal or state inspection to be allowed to receive a trench permit. Nevertheless, when permitting authorities, the DOS, or the DPS are put on notice of a potential violation of chapter 82A or 520 CMR 14.00, they are authorized to investigate the possible violation and take action where a violation is determined to exist. Actions that municipal permitting authorities may take include immediately shutting down a trench site where a violation is found. Permitting authorities may further suspend or revoke a permit following the opportunity for an administrative hearing.

[Back to Top](#)

*Q. What are the safety precautions that I must take as an excavator?*

A. Whenever a trench will be *unattended* an excavator must take measures to provide adequate protections for the general public that will prevent unauthorized access to the unattended trench. According to 520 CMR 14.02, an "unattended trench" is "a trench where neither the permit holder, excavator, nor any of the people who work in or at the trench are present." When a trench is going to be unattended, excavators may choose one of 4 options to make the trench safe:

- erect a fence that is at least 6' tall with openings no greater than 4" between vertical supports;
- use a roadplate that is at least 3/4" thick steel;
- post an attendant such as a police detail or flag man at the trench; or
- backfill the trench before leaving.

[Back to Top](#)

*Q. I own a private construction company that already adheres to the OSHA requirements for protecting my employees' safety when they work in trenches. Aren't these Trench Safety regulations redundant?*

A.No. OSHA's regulations apply to worker safety and require the use of a "protective system" such as a trench box or shoring to protect employees from cave-ins. The trench regulations do not regulate worker safety. Rather, the Excavation and Trench Safety regulations at 520 CMR 14.00 regulate protections that construction companies, municipalities, state agencies, or any person that creates a trench must adhere to for the purpose of protecting the General Public. Moreover, while OSHA's regulations apply while workers are present in, at, or around the trench, the regulations at 520 CMR 14.00 apply when the trench is unattended. By definition, an "unattended trench" is one where workers are not present in or at the trench. For a side-by-side comparison of the OSHA regulations and 520 CMR 14.00 see the table, above.

[Back to Top](#)

*Q. Is a trench permit required for cemetery burials?*

A.No. According to the statute, MGL c. 82A, §1, the regulations and the requirement for a permit apply to "all construction related excavations and trench safety." Cemetery burials are not "construction related" and therefore do not require a permit.

[Back to Top](#)

*Q. Is a trench permit required for farms?*

A. Yes, if the trench is construction related. Whenever a construction related trench is created a permit is required under [MGL c. 82A, §1](#).

[Back to Top](#)

*Q. What action, if any, may a permitting authority take if it finds a violation of 520 CMR 14.00?*

A. If the permitting authority or an inspector from DPS or DOS identifies a serious threat to public safety, he or she may order an immediate shutdown of the trench worksite. Conditions warranting the immediate shutdown of a trench include a fatality of serious injury to a member of the General Public; the failure to use effective protections for the General Public; the failure to obtain a permit; or any other condition that constitutes a serious threat to life, limb, or property of the General Public as determined by the permitting authority. An appeal from the immediate shutdown may be made to the permitting authority or DPS/DOS. The appeal must be made within 10 calendar days of the shutdown. The trench worksite may not operate again until such time as the entity ordering the shutdown has reinspected the worksite and is satisfied that protections for the General Public are in use.

Where the permitting authority determines that the threat to public safety may warrant the suspension or revocation of the trench permit, the permitting authority may convene a hearing in accordance with the [Massachusetts Administrative Procedures Act, MGL c. 30A](#).

In addition to a post-hearing suspension or revocation, the DPS is statutorily authorized to also assess administrative fines against an excavator. See [MGL c. 82A, §1](#). The Department of Public Safety sends a written notice of intent to impose administrative fines, which may be up to \$5,000.00 per violation, to the violator. The party alleged to have violated the regulations may then request a hearing. Hearings are not held prior to the assessment of a fine, but must be requested in writing and must be filed with the Department of Public Safety within 10 calendar days of receipt of the notice of violation. The failure to make a timely request for a hearing shall constitute a waiver of the right to a hearing. All hearings shall be convened by a Hearing Officer of the Department of Public Safety and shall be held in accordance with [MGL c. 30A](#).

[Back to Top](#)