

Guidance for Archaeological Site Monitoring

Monitoring is the observation of construction excavation activities by an archaeologist in order to identify, recover, protect and/or document archaeological information or materials. An archaeologist who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards must be present for all monitored excavations. The selection of a prehistoric or historic qualified archaeologist should be based upon the type of archaeological deposits anticipated to be encountered.

During monitoring, excavation is not under the control of the archaeologist although the archaeologist may be given authority to temporarily halt construction work to do his or her job. Therefore, a protocol for construction work stoppages must be developed to enable archaeologists time for recordation and for any archaeological data recovery that may be needed.

Our office recommends that a scope of work be prepared prior to construction to determine protocol. The scope should clearly state the following:

1. The authority of the archaeologist(s) to halt excavations to allow for investigations. This authority should be conveyed to all levels of the contractor's on-site excavation team, including the equipment operator(s).
2. The amount of time during which construction excavations are to be made available for archaeological work and/or inspection. This should be specific with a formula appropriate to the nature and size of the project area (for example, a plan used for Pearl Street in Albany, New York specified the archaeologists could inspect the construction trench for 1 hour per every 20 linear feet of trench).
3. The nature of the archaeological work within the contractor's excavations (e.g., photography, drawing of profiles, screening of removed soil for artifacts, taking of soil samples, hand excavation, etc.) as well as the objectives of the archaeological work. Include the types of resources which may be encountered based on preliminary research or the results of prior excavations.
4. The actions to be taken by archaeologists, should resources requiring further study be encountered during construction. The action plan includes a protocol for consultation and decision making required in order to slow down or halt construction activities (e.g., consultations with construction, engineering and agency personnel), identification of specific persons to be contacted, and the amount of time that archaeologists will have to record and/or excavate resources.
5. The assumptions under which time estimates are made, both relating to physical site conditions and to archaeological situations. For example, if the monitoring plan assumes warm weather conditions, the plan may need to change under winter conditions. Include the need for a change in scheduling due to unanticipated archaeological finds.
6. Specifications for procedures if construction plans are changed during the course of the construction work. Include adequate time for the archaeologists to consider the sensitivity of the additional locations and/or depths of construction to be affected by the new plans and to enable all parties to consider and agree to any modification of the monitoring plan which may be necessary.
7. Treatment of artifacts, technical analysis of samples, curation, preparation of reports, etc., as specified in the South Carolina Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Investigations.

In the event human remains should be encountered during an archaeological monitoring project, work must stop immediately in the vicinity of the uncovered human remains. Immediate notice regarding the discovery should be made to the appropriate local law enforcement agency, the lead federal or state agency, and the Deputy State Archaeologist. The Deputy State Archaeologist will confer with the project's principal investigator and field supervisor, and direct them in the appropriate course of action. Priority will be given to preservation of the materials in place. No burial materials will be removed unless it is necessary for their survival.