



SLOVENSKI STANDARD
oSIST prEN 18344:2026
01-junij-2026

Izvedba posebnih geotehničnih del - Umetno zamrzovanje tal

Execution of special geotechnical works - Artificial ground freezing

Ausführung von Arbeiten im Spezialtiefbau - Künstliche Bodenvereisung

Exécution des travaux géotechniques spéciaux - Congélation artificielle des sols

Ta slovenski standard je istoveten z: prEN 18344

ICS:

93.020	Zemeljska dela. Izkopavanja. Gradnja temeljev. Dela pod zemljo	Earthworks. Excavations. Foundation construction. Underground works
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EUROPEAN STANDARD
NORME EUROPÉENNE
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DRAFT
prEN 18344

April 2026

ICS 93.020

English Version

Execution of special geotechnical works - Artificial ground freezing

Exécution des travaux géotechniques spéciaux -
Congélation artificielle des sols

Ausführung von Arbeiten im Spezialtiefbau -
Künstliche Bodenvereisung

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Ref. No. prEN 18344:2026 E

Contents	Page
European foreword	5
1 Scope	6
2 Normative references	6
3 Terms and definitions	6
4 Information needed for the execution of the works	9
4.1 General.....	9
4.2 Specific information.....	10
5 Geotechnical investigation	11
5.1 General.....	11
5.2 Specific requirements	11
6 Materials and products	12
6.1 General.....	12
6.2 Water.....	12
6.3 Cement and other hydraulic binders.....	12
6.4 Clay materials.....	12
6.5 Admixtures.....	13
6.6 Other materials.....	13
6.7 Freezing distribution circuit and pipe materials.....	13
6.8 Coolants.....	13
6.9 Instruments and sensors.....	13
6.10 Insulation.....	13
7 Considerations related to design	13
7.1 General.....	13
7.2 Drilling geometry.....	15
7.3 Structural design.....	15
7.4 Thermal design.....	15
7.5 Monitoring system design.....	16
7.6 Other design aspects.....	16
8 Execution	16
8.1 General.....	16
8.2 Tolerances.....	17
8.3 Preliminary works.....	18
8.4 Method statement, documents needed prior to execution.....	18
8.5 Drilling.....	21
8.6 Freeze pipe/ monitoring pipe installation	21
8.7 Installation of freeze plant and distribution circuit.....	22
8.8 Freezing operation	23
8.8.1 General.....	23
8.8.2 Freezing phase	23
8.8.3 Maintenance phase.....	23
8.9 Thawing phase.....	24
8.10 Construction site decommissioning.....	24
9 Supervision, inspection, monitoring, testing and maintenance	24

9.1	General	24
9.2	Drilling and freeze / temperature monitoring pipe installation	24
9.3	Installation of freezing plant and distribution circuit	25
9.4	Freezing operation	25
9.4.1	Monitoring of freeze system	25
9.4.2	Monitoring of frozen ground body development	25
9.4.3	Monitoring of water pressure/level	25
9.4.4	Monitoring of induced displacements	26
9.4.5	Additional monitoring	26
10	Record	26
10.1	Documents to be available on site	26
10.2	Documents recommended to be on site	26
10.3	Documents to be produced on site	26
10.3.1	Drilling reporting	26
10.3.2	Freezing system installation reporting	27
10.3.3	AGF monitoring reporting	27
10.3.4	Water pressure/level monitoring reporting	27
10.3.5	Displacement monitoring reporting	27
11	Special requirements	27
11.1	General	27
11.2	Health and Safety	28
11.3	Environmental aspects	29
11.4	Sustainability	29
11.5	Impact of adjacent structure	30
Annex A	(informative) Freeze systems	31
A.1	Freeze system, closed circuit	31
A.2	Freeze system, open circuit	32
Annex B	(informative) Considerations related to design of the AGF works and resulting laboratory test program	33
B.1	General approach	33
B.2	Parameters	33
B.3	Structural design	34
B.4	Thermal design	34
B.5	Required laboratory test program for structural and watertightness design	35
B.6	Required laboratory test program for thermal design	36
Annex C	(informative) Commonly used models for structural design	37
C.1	General approach	37
C.2	Modelling approach according to Klein	38
C.3	Modelling approach according to Orth	39
Annex D	(informative) Points of attention	41
D.1	General	41
D.2	Pressure relief pipes	41
D.3	Settlements induced by de-structuration of clay	41

prEN 18344:2026 (E)

D.4	Low moisture content	41
D.5	Sealing AGF to other structures.....	41
D.6	Over freezing.....	42
D.7	Significant groundwater velocity.....	42
D.8	Influence of heat sources	42
D.9	Excavation in contact with AGF wall	42
Annex E (informative)	Typical pressure for testing freeze pipes, freeze heads and distribution circuit	43
E.1	Maximum system operating pressure (MSOP).....	43
E.2	Testing pressure.....	44
E.2.1	General.....	44
E.2.2	Freeze pipes testing pressure	44
E.2.3	Distribution circuit and freeze heads.....	45
E.3	Pressure test procedure	45
Bibliography	46

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European foreword

This document (prEN 18344:2026) has been prepared by Technical Committee CEN/TC 288 “Execution of special geotechnical work”, the secretariat of which is held by AFNOR.

This document is currently submitted to the CEN Enquiry.

This document has been prepared under a Standardization Request given to CEN by the European Commission and the European Free Trade Association, and supports essential requirements of EU Directive(s) / Regulation(s).

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prEN 18344:2026 (E)**1 Scope**

This document establishes general principles for the execution, testing and monitoring of Artificial Ground Freezing (AGF) works.

AGF is the process of changing the water in the ground from liquid to solid state in a controlled way by artificial means.

This document is applicable to:

- civil works (tunnels, shafts, retaining walls, plugs, underpinning, ...);
- environmental works (remediation, cut-off walls, ...).

This document does not apply to:

- permafrost;
- seasonal frost;
- mining applications.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

EN 1990-1, *Eurocode — Basis of structural and geotechnical design — Part 1: New structures*

EN 1997-1, *Eurocode 7 — Geotechnical design — Part 1: General rules*

EN 1997-2, *Eurocode 7 — Geotechnical design — Part 2: Ground properties*

EN 197-1, *Cement — Part 1: Composition, specifications and conformity criteria for common cements*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminology databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp/>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <https://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1**artificial ground freezing (AGF)**

ground improvement technique consisting in extracting heat from any kind of ground, to temporarily change the pore water from liquid to solid state

Note 1 to entry: The aim is to achieve impermeability and/or to improve the mechanical properties of the ground.

Note 2 to entry: This freezing process is reversible. However, after thawing initial ground parameters could be affected.

Note 3 to entry: AGF works include all ancillary activities needed for the execution of AGF (e.g. drillings).

3.2

coolant

fluid used to extract heat from the ground (e.g. brine, liquid nitrogen, glycol, carbon dioxide)

3.3

cryogenic fluid

liquified gases at very low temperature that are used as coolant

3.4

distribution circuit

circuit distributing the coolant from the freeze plant to the freeze pipes through the freeze heads

Note 1 to entry: It consists of a supply line (feeding line) and a return line.

Note 2 to entry: While for closed circuit the return line is connected to the freeze plant, for open circuit it is open to the atmosphere (exhaust line).

Note 3 to entry: For more information, see Annex A.

3.5

freeze design criteria

shape, thickness, temperature of the frozen ground to be achieved according to the design

3.6

freeze head

connection device installed between the distribution circuit and the freeze pipes

Note 1 to entry: For more information, see Annex A.

3.7

freeze pipe

pipe installed in the ground, allowing the flow of the coolant to exchange heat with the ground

Note 1 to entry: "freeze probe" or "freeze lance" are terms admitted instead of "freeze pipe".

3.8

freeze plant

part of a freeze system capable to supply the cold coolant necessary to freeze the ground in a closed or open circuit

Note 1 to entry: The freeze plant is connected to the distribution circuit.

3.9

freeze system

system capable of freezing the ground using a closed or open circuit. Sum of freeze plant, distribution circuit, freeze heads and freeze pipes

3.10

freeze unit

unitary equipment able to lower the temperature of a coolant

Note 1 to entry: In a closed circuit freeze system it is part of the freeze plant.

Note 2 to entry: "chiller" is a term admitted instead of "freeze unit".

prEN 18344:2026 (E)**3.11****freezing, closed circuit**

(indirect method)

freezing method where the coolant is re-used in a closed loop after heat exchange with the ground

Note 1 to entry: After this heat exchange, the temperature of the coolant is lowered again passing through the freeze unit, where a refrigerant is used.

3.12**freezing, open circuit**

(direct method)

freezing method where the coolant is released to the atmosphere as a gas after heat exchange with the ground

3.13**freezing, combined method**

freezing method where both open circuit and closed circuit methods are used, either at the same time, or in different phases

3.14**freezing phase**

(freezing-up)

working phase where the frozen ground body grows until reaching the freeze design criteria

3.15**frost creep**

increase in strain in the frozen ground body at constant effective stress during all AGF phases

Note 1 to entry: The creep depends on time, temperature, stress and ground type.

3.16**frost heave**

swelling of ground due to the formation of ice caused by AGF

Note 1 to entry: That includes the formation of ice lenses at the freezing front as well as volumetric expansion due to phase change.

Note 2 to entry: Frost heave can affect ground surface and objects, on or in the ground.

3.17**frost pressure**

positive pressure developed at ice-water interface in a ground as it freezes

3.18**frozen ground body**

volume of frozen ground formed by means of AGF

3.19**maintenance phase**

phase in the AGF process, following the freezing phase, during which the frozen ground body is maintained according to the freeze design criteria

3.20

monitoring system

system consisting of sensors and data acquisition system to monitor AGF and its effects

3.21

pressure test

test performed on the distribution circuit and freeze pipes to check their tightness

Note 1 to entry: Test pressure (TP) depends on the maximum system operating pressure (MSOP).

Note 2 to entry: For more information, see Annex E.

3.22

refrigerant

fluid circulating in the freeze unit to allow lowering the temperature of the coolant

Note 1 to entry: Refrigerant can also be used as a coolant.

Note 2 to entry: “cooling agent” is a term admitted instead of “refrigerant”.

3.23

thawing phase

phase in the AGF process, following the maintenance phase, when heat extraction has been definitively stopped

3.24

thaw deformation

deformation of the ground resulting from thawing of frozen ground body

4 Information needed for the execution of the works

4.1 General

Prior to the execution of the work, all necessary information shall be made available.

This information should include, where relevant:

- any legal or statutory restrictions (e.g. permissions for working and deliveries 24/7, setup and operation of a storage tank for cryogenic fluid);
- the locations and conditions of structures, roads, services, etc. adjacent to the work, including any necessary surveys;
- previous use of the site;
- the geometry of the site (boundary conditions, topography, access, slopes, etc.);
- available space for site installations and storage;
- headroom restrictions and confined spaces;
- geotechnical information and data as specified in Clause 5;
- presence of obstructions in the ground (underground structures, services old masonry, anchors, concrete, blocks and boulders, etc.);

prEN 18344:2026 (E)

- presence of natural and/or manmade cavities (caverns, mines, large voids, discontinuities and cracks, etc.);
- archaeological remains;
- possible presence of unexploded ordnance;
- the environmental restrictions, including noise, vibration, pollution;
- and all other information that may influence the execution.

4.2 Specific information**4.2.1** The specific information should cover, when relevant:

- objectives of AGF (impermeability and/or structural purposes);
- geotechnical and hydrogeotechnical information and date as specified in Clause 5;
- design report including mechanical and thermal analysis;
- need of a preliminary ground treatment;
- need of a specific AGF method;
- the location of main grid lines for setting out drilling positions;
- technical specifications;
- adjacent structures (types, loads, and geometry) and, sensitivity to movement and/or low temperatures;
- presence of utilities (cables, pipes, sewers, etc.) and sensitivity to movement and/or low temperatures;
- presence of polluted ground, type, extent and degree of pollution and possible presence of anything that may impact the freezing point;
- presence of products introduced into the ground (e.g. chemicals, insulating materials, foams) which could have a detrimental impact on AGF;
- any specific requirements for AGF works, in particular those pertaining to tolerances, quality of materials, methods and frequency of testing;
- where available, previous experience with freezing works on or adjacent to the site;
- proposed adjacent enabling or advance works that may affect the AGF works (e.g. dewatering works, excavation works and tunnelling);
- presence of any kind of heat source in the proximity of the ground to be frozen (e.g. heated buildings, district heating lines, sewers, energy piles);
- requirements for instrumentation and monitoring of potentially affected structures;