



CONFINED SPACES

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All employees authorized to enter a confined space work environment need to know their roles and follow safety procedures without exception.

By definition, a confined space:

- Is large enough for an employee to enter fully and perform assigned work.
- Is not designed for continuous occupancy by the employee.
- Has a limited or restricted means of entry or exit.

Primary Hazards:

- Oxygen deficiency.
- Exposure to toxic substances.
- Combustible or Explosive hazards.
- Inverted body position
- Excessive Noise & Vibration
- Slips and Falls
- Engulfment – Risk of water or material suffocation
- Electrical Hazards – does anything in the space require Lockout/Tagout?

Safety Procedures:

- Test for oxygen deficiency.
- Sample for combustible gases. (Most combustible gas meters will not work in oxygen deficient atmospheres.)
- Continually monitor for toxic substances (i.e., gases) as work progresses.

Making a Confined Space Workable:

- If space can be vented continually, flush out the space with fresh air.
- If space is unable to be vented, be sure to use proper respiration equipment.
- Be aware that spark producing equipment should never be used to flush out confined spaces.

Basic Rescue Procedures:

- Never rush to the aid of a fellow employee in a confined space.
- Always be sure that someone serves as the attendant and monitors fellow workers in the confined space. (The attendant is to perform these duties from outside of the space.)
- All workers in a confined space must work with a lifeline attached outside of the space.
- All rescuers must be competent in the use of rescue equipment and self-contained breathing units.

Confined spaces need not be dangerous places to work if the basic precautions listed above are routinely followed. It is a rare circumstance that a single fatality occurs in a confined space; usually there are multiple fatalities!