



Safety Tip of the Month

Provided by
Safety Consultation and Training Section

April 2005 - Confined Space Identification

OSHA requires employers to evaluate their workplaces to determine if any spaces are permit-required confined spaces. It sounds simple enough, but what are confined and permit-required confined spaces, and what are some of an employer's responsibilities regarding them?

While confined spaces can be found in all places of employment including construction sites, the most detailed information can be found in OSHA's General Industry standards. A "confined space" is defined in OSHA's General Industry Standard (29 CFR 1910) as a space that that must meet three conditions:

1. Is large enough and is so configured that an employee can bodily enter and perform assigned work and
2. Has limited or restricted means for entry or exit (for example tanks, vessels, silos, bins, hoppers, vaults, pits, and etc.) and
3. Is not designed for continuous employee occupancy.

While confined spaces by themselves are not inherently unsafe, they can be under certain conditions. A "permit-required confined space" is a more dangerous condition and is defined as a "confined space" having one or more of the following characteristics:

1. Contains or has a potential to contain a hazardous atmosphere;
2. Contains a material that has the potential for engulfing an entrant;
3. Has an internal configuration such that an entrant could be trapped or asphyxiated by inwardly converging walls or by a floor which slopes downward and tapers to a smaller cross-section; or
4. Contains any other recognized serious safety or health hazard.

If a workplace contains permit required confined spaces, an employer is required to inform exposed employees, by posting danger signs or by any other equally effective means, of the existence and location of the danger posed by the permit spaces. If an employer decides that their employees will not enter these spaces, the employer must take effective measures to prevent its employees from entering the permit spaces.

However, if an employer decides that its employees will enter permit spaces for any reason, the employer must develop and implement a permit space program as required in OSHA's Confined Space standard. All employees entering into confined or enclosed spaces must be trained as to the nature of the hazards involved, the necessary precautions to be taken, the use of appropriate protective and emergency equipment, and specific permit space entry procedures.

For more information or for a schedule of training courses offered at no charge by SCATS, call toll free 1.877.4SAFENV [1-(877)-472-3368]. Or visit, www.4safenv.state.nv.us.

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