

EHS Fact Sheets – Confined Spaces

Permit required confined space entry can be immediately dangerous to life and health of workers if the hazards are not properly identified, evaluated, tested, and controlled.

The common hazards in these environments are oxygen deficiencies, toxic gases, and physical hazards within the space. If the proper precautions are not taken by identifying and monitoring the atmosphere and workers inside, emergencies can happen.

When emergencies occur very dangerous to the workers inside and outside of the space. *Two-thirds of all fatalities associated with confined spaces* are the would-be rescuers who enter the space for rescue.



What is a “confined space”? It must contain all three characteristics:

1. Large enough for an employee to bodily enter and perform assigned work; and
2. Has limited or restricted means for entry or exit; and
3. Not designed for continuous human occupancy

Permit-required confined spaces contain all three above characteristics and one or more of the following:

- Contains or has potential to contain a hazardous atmosphere
- Contains a material that has the potential for engulfing the entrant
- Has the internal configuration that entrant could become trapped or asphyxiated
- Contains any other recognized serious safety or health hazard

Planning and controlling the hazards are essential to safe entry of confined spaces. The standard operating procedure outlines:

- Responsibilities for individuals and departments
- Covers written permits forms & identification of spaces
- Training for entrants, attendants, and supervisors
- Atmospheric testing using gas meters
- Ventilation methods
- Non-entry rescue and self-rescue methods
- Emergency response communications
- Inventory of confined spaces

What to do if my department enters confined spaces?

Contact EH&S at (707) 826-5711 or (707)826-3302 for info:

- Training is available for workers and supervisors who enter these spaces

Examples of Permit Confined Spaces Include:

- Manholes
- Septic tanks
- Water tanks
- Unventilated vaults
- Hoppers or silos
- Boilers
- Pits and excavations

Non-Permit Confined Spaces include:

- Ventilated vaults
- Attic crawl spaces
- Basement crawl spaces
- Storage containers
- Irrigation / sump pumps



Additional Resources:

- [Cal/OSHA: Confined Space Guide \(PDF\)](#)
- [Cal/OSHA: Emphasis Program](#)