



Just the Facts

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Confined Spaces

BACKGROUND

On 14 January 1993, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) published the long-awaited Final Rule on Permit-Required Confined Spaces (29 CFR 1910.146) in the Federal Register (Vol. 58, No. 9, pp 4462-4562). This new regulation includes guidelines for safe entry into confined spaces and maintaining an effective permit system.

IDENTIFICATION OF CONFINED SPACES

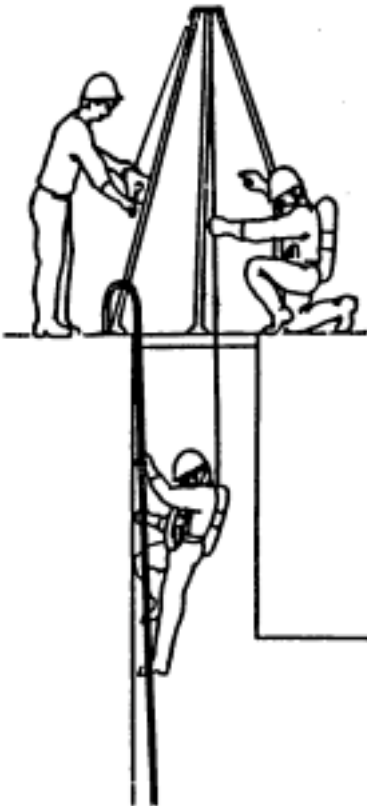
OSHA defines a confined space as one that - -

- (1) Is large enough and so configured that an employee can bodily enter and perform assigned work.
- (2) Has limited or restricted means for entry or exit.
- (3) Is not designed for continuous employee occupancy.

A confined space that contains a recognized serious safety or health hazard, such as an existing or potential atmospheric hazard, engulfment hazard, or physical configuration hazard, is classified as a permit-required confined space (permit space). A confined space that does not present any of these hazards is classified as a non-permit confined space.

REQUIREMENTS

Permit spaces should be identified by danger signs or other means that specify the existence and location of the confined space and the danger posed by the confined space. If employees are not required to enter a permit space, the space should be isolated or closed to prevent entry. If employees are required to enter a permit space, see 29 CFR 1910.146 (b) definition of entry; a written permit space entry program should be developed and implemented. This program should address - -



- ◆ Industrial Hygienists
- ◆ Permit vs Non-Permit Confined Space
- ◆ Defining Confined Spaces

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- (1) Identifying and evaluating the hazards in permit spaces.
- (2) Preventing unauthorized entry.
- (3) Specifying entry requirements and processes.
- (4) Providing necessary personal protective equipment for monitoring, ventilating, and lighting of rooms and emergency room.
- (5) Evaluating permit space conditions.
- (6) Providing at least one attendant outside the permit space.
- (7) Providing instructions and communication equipment to attendants who monitor multiple permit spaces.
- (8) Designating and training authorized entrants, attendants, and entry supervisors.
- (9) Developing a rescue and emergency plan.
- (10) Developing a permit system.
- (11) Developing program audit guidelines.

An entry permit must be issued for each entry into a confined space. This permit should contain specific information about the operation, personnel, safety and personal protective measures, acceptable entry conditions, the emergency plan and the rescue plan, and any other information necessary to ensure employee safety. All employees involved with permit spaces must be trained for their designated tasks.

Alternate procedures may be used to enter a permit space when continuous forced air ventilation alone is demonstrated to maintain safety of a permit space and periodic monitoring is conducted while in the space.

The complete Permit-Required Confined Space Final Rule was published in Volume 58, No. 9, Federal Register, 14 January 1993, pp 4462-4563, and includes a decision logic flowchart, procedures for atmospheric testing, examples of permit-required confined space programs, and sample permits.

Contact the Industrial Hygiene Division at USACHPPM-South for specific questions on permit-required confined spaces.