



Working Safely in Confined Spaces

A confined space incident is not very common, but it can be the most deadly of all worksite accidents. That's because the hazards tend to be misunderstood and underestimated. And many confined spaces fatalities involve not one, but two victims: the worker and the rescuer. Knowing the difference between a confined space and a permit-required confined space is important for your safety when working in these environments.

Confined Spaces

A confined space refers to a space that has limited openings for entry and exit, has unfavorable natural ventilation that could contain or produce dangerous air contaminants, and is not intended for continuous employee occupancy.

Examples of confined spaces include:

- Storage tanks
 - Ship compartments
 - Pits
 - Silos
 - Vats
 - Degreasers
 - Boilers
 - Ventilation and exhaust ducts
 - Sewers
 - Tunnels
 - Underground utility vaults
 - Pipelines
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Permit-Required Confined Spaces

A permit-required confined space includes one or more of the following characteristics: contains or has the potential to contain a hazardous atmosphere; contains material that could engulf an entrant; has a design that could cause an occupant to become trapped or asphyxiated; and/or contains other serious health or safety hazards.

Examples of permit-required confined spaces include:

- Sewers
 - Rendering plants
 - Workplaces where portable tanks are fabricated and serviced
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Safety Considerations

When working in either location:

- Follow all Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations regarding confined and permit-required confined spaces.
- Review and follow 's written procedures.
- Make sure you clearly understand the difference between confined and permit-required confined spaces.
- Don't enter a permit-required confined space without proper training and a permit to enter.
- Identify and eliminate any obvious physical hazards prior to entering.

- Monitor for oxygen content, flammability, toxicity and explosive hazards as soon as you enter.
 - Use fall protection, rescue, air-monitoring, ventilation, communication and lighting equipment according to specific entry procedures.
 - Maintain contact, visually or via phone or two-way radio, with a trained attendant at all times.
 - Make sure to call for help immediately if you need assistance while working.
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