

Confined space

USQSafe, Human Resources



Fact: Each year in Australia, people are killed in a wide range of confined spaces, from storage vessels, to complex industrial equipment. Many of these fatalities occur when attempting to rescue another person in a confined space. Additionally, people can be seriously injured from other hazards found within confined spaces.

General safety tips

Managers/supervisors should always conduct a risk assessment to identify and control any hazards associated with entering a confined space in the particular situation.

All applicable workers should be trained in confined space entry.

What is a confined space?

A 'confined space' means an enclosed or partially enclosed space that:

- Is not designed or intended primarily to be occupied by a person; and
- Is, or is designed or intended to be, at normal atmospheric pressure whilst any person is in the space; and
- Is or is likely to be a risk to health and safety from;
- An atmosphere that does not have a safe oxygen level; or
- Contaminants, including airborne gases, vapors and dusts, that may cause injury from fire or explosion; or
- Harmful concentrations of any airborne contaminants; or
- Engulfment.

Examples of confined space include

- Storage tanks, tank cars, process vessels, pressure vessels, boilers, silos and other tank-like compartments;
- Pits and degreasers; pipes, sewers, sewer pump stations including wet and dry wells, shafts and ducts;
- Shipboard spaces entered through small hatchways or access points, cargo tanks, cellular double bottom tanks, duct keels, ballast or oil tanks and void spaces; and
- Storm water drains, sewers, pits, tunnels, and similar structures.

What are the health hazards in a confined space?

- Oxygen Deficiency – When the level of oxygen is low, life is threatened.

- Toxic Gases – these can cause poisoning or suffocation.
- Explosion or Fire – a buildup of flammable gasses or vapors can cause an explosion.

When is a confined space a risk?

Danger is always present during routine tasks such as maintenance, inspections, repairs and cleaning.

Risk assessment

Before entering or working in a confined space, a risk assessment must be conducted to identify potential hazards and risks.

Always conduct a risk assessment before any controls are implemented and a risk assessment after the controls are implemented to ensure the risk has been reduced.

Where generic type work is carried out in confined spaces (maintenance) a generic risk assessment may be used for several confined spaces, however these risk assessments must be on the job and discussed by staff before entry to a confined space.

Take into consideration

- Oxygen levels.
- Toxic gasses.
- Explosive gases.
- Falling objects.
- Flooding.
- Heat.
- Isolation of electrical and mechanical services.
- Emergency and rescue arrangements.

How do I work in a confined space safely?

- **Never** enter a confined space unless you are trained, have been deemed competent, and are authorized to do so;
- Ask your Supervisor for an "entry permit", before entering a confined space;
- Conduct a Risk Assessment before entering the confined space;
- Test the atmosphere every time before you enter;
- Always monitor the atmosphere while working in the space;
- Always ensure adequate ventilation while working in the space;
- Make sure that the electrical services are isolated. Whoever enters the confined space must check to ensure that it is isolated;
- Always wear a safety harness and life line while working in the confined space;
- Make sure another suitable qualified person is present in close proximity to the entrance of the confined space acting as an observer and standby rescue person;
- Sign the entry permit;
- **Never** smoke in a confined space;

- If you are required to wear a breathing apparatus, **Never** remove it in the confined space;
- Always wear the Personal Protective Equipment provided;
- If an alarm is activated, get out immediately;
- Re-test the atmosphere before entering;
- On completion of work, always restore the confined space to normal; and
- Maintain all confined space equipment and record it in a logbook.

If an emergency happens, what do I do?

- Call for help immediately;
- Attempt to retrieve the person WITHOUT entering the confined space;
- **Never** enter the confined space to rescue a collapsed worker without training and breathing apparatus;
- Once the person has been retrieved, commence resuscitation if necessary;
- Get medical assistance if possible;
- Isolate the area;
- Notify your Supervisor and USQSafe immediately; and
- Submit a report into the University Hazard and Incident Reporting and Tracking System UniHIRTS.

Legislation

Work Health and Safety Act 2011(Qld) – s19

Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 (Qld)

Australian Standard AS 2865 – 2009 Confined spaces

Confined Spaces Code of Practice 2011

Record of training:

I have read and understand the information provided to me for confined space and I have been issued with:



Tea break talk paper – confined space.

Employee's name (PRINT) Employee's signature __/__/__
Date

Trainer's name (PRINT) Trainer's signature __/__/__
Date

Document procedure:

- Original - to be kept on the employee's record of training
- Copy – forward to USQSafe for archive filing
- Electronic – USQSafe to record on PeopleSoft