

SAFETY MEMO

Month Day, 2022 – Mitigation Measures for Working in Confined Space



Did you know?

Definition

Confined spaces are present in many industry sectors and may, occasionally, be entered to perform inspection, maintenance, or repair work. These spaces are defined by legislation as a restrictive or confined space, which means an enclosed, or partially enclosed, space not designed or intended for continuous human occupancy; with a restricted, limited, or impeded means of entry or exit because of its construction. These spaces can become confined or hazardous spaces to a worker entering because of an atmosphere change, a change of circumstances in the space, or the potential characteristics of an activity that could produce harmful consequences in the space. Some examples of confined spaces are wells, tanks, cisterns, pits, galleries, cellars, silos, and other similar areas. Special precautions must be taken, and all workers must be adequately trained.



Main Risks

Some of the major risks of working in confined spaces are limited access and egress, suffocation, poisoning by vapors or gases, and fire and explosion. Other risks to consider are falling, drowning, or any electrical / biological / chemical related hazards.

The speed of emergency response in such a space is essential during an accident. However, rescuing or evacuating a victim in a confined space is often difficult. These accidents often claim several victims: the workers and / or those who attempt to rescue them.

Risk Prevention

Identification and prevention of these risks require a preliminary analysis, a reconnaissance of the space, and a good knowledge of the processes implemented and the materials present.

The analysis must consider the specific conditions created by the work and the interventions necessary to

define and put in place appropriate prevention and protection measures. To ensure that the work is carried out in safe conditions, it is recommended to:

- Establish a Confined Space Entry plan to determine all risks.
- Set up specific procedures for intervention in confined spaces with instructions adapted to the workers
- Employ skilled workers who are trained and competent to work in confined spaces.
- Establish an entry permit procedure to inform the workers of any inherent dangers, configuration of the space, process that will be happening, and materials used in the confined space.
- Designate a qualified Safety Watch person posted outside the entrance (even in the absence of visual contact), with radio communication to the workers inside the space, ensuring good communication with the workers inside.
- Ventilate the confined space before and during the time the workers are inside the space
- Provide workers with reliable, regularly calibrated and checked gas detectors with alarms and suitable protection means.
- Define an Emergency Response Plan for the specific confined space and communicate to the workers the measures to be taken in the event of an incident.
- Keep a record of any dangerous installations and equipment.

In Summary

A prior analysis of the risks by a qualified person makes it possible to define the preventive and protective measures to be implemented to reduce the risk of accidents and limit the harmful consequences.

