

Safety Facts: Confined Space Entry*



A confined space is an enclosed or partially enclosed area that is big enough for a worker to enter. The space may be enclosed on all sides (for example, a bin or tank), or as few as two sides (for example, an enclosed conveyor).

Confined spaces are not designed for someone to work in regularly. They are places where entry may be needed from time to time for inspection, cleaning, maintenance, or repair.

You can recognize a confined space because it will not have things you would normally find in a workspace designed for occupancy, such as, permanent utilities, wall coverings and furniture and easy access.

Incidents in confined spaces are not common, but when they do occur the consequences can be devastating. Confined space incidents can happen suddenly without warning. Incidents involving atmospheric hazards (for example, toxic gases or a lack of oxygen) in confined spaces often cause serious injury or death to more than one person.

Four Characteristics of a Confined Space

1. Enclosed or partially enclosed
2. Not designed for continuous human occupancy
3. Restricted entry or exit
4. Large enough for a worker to enter to perform assigned work

If all of these exist, the space is considered a confined space and a hazard assessment is needed.

Risks Associated to Confined Space

Confined space entry may expose a worker to many hazards. Typically, confined space incidents happen when:

1. A confined space is being prepared for entry.
2. Untrained workers or others are entering a confined space.
3. Trained workers not following procedures.
4. Work is happening in a confined space.

Typical Confined Spaces

- Large liquid holding tanks, such as brewing and wine fermentation tanks
- Boiler compartments
- Crawl spaces
- Mobile equipment
- Pits, sumps and any pump houses associated with them
- Silos, storage tanks, vats

Preventative Next Steps

- Identify and create an inventory of all confined spaces at your workplace
- Post warning signs and secure entry
- Conduct a hazard assessment on each confined space
- Develop safe work procedures for each confined space
- Testing the atmosphere in a confined space
- Train all workers that work in or around confined space
- Develop a confined space rescue plan



For additional resources visit:

Work Safe BC, Managing confined space hazards. Retrieved July, 2019.

