

Confined Spaces: Employee Factsheet

Confined spaces kill

They are places like tanks, drains, trenches or sewers, which if people enter can kill them due to a toxic atmosphere, lack of oxygen, heat, being drowned, trapped or involved in a fire or explosion.

Do you carry out work in or around confined spaces?

Did you know?

Examples of confined spaces are:

- boilers
- storage tanks
- trenches
- process vessels
- silos
- storage bins
- wood pellet stores for biomass boilers
- flues
- ducts
- pipes
- sewers
- drains
- Excavations and tunnels.

Fact 1

Approximately 10 people are killed in confined spaces per year. Source: HSE

Fact 2

60% of confined space deaths involve people trying to rescue those already trapped or injured.

Never enter a confined space unless you have been trained to do so and have the right safety and rescue equipment. Never go into a confined space when you are alone, you must always have someone outside the confined space, who you can be in contact with and who can implement rescue arrangements. Never use engine driven equipment in a confined space as you could be killed by the fumes. Never enter a confined space to rescue others unless you are trained and equipped to do so, as you are otherwise just likely to add yourself to the casualty toll.

Training

Before entering a confined space, ensure you have been informed and instructed about the potential hazards associated with confined spaces and trained in the relevant safe system of work, safety equipment and rescue arrangements.

Have the risks been identified and adequately assessed?

Consider:

- is entry essential?
- can the job be undertaken from outside?
- are there any atmospheric hazards
- could there be any residue that needs to be removed before entry
- other hazards such as temperature, drowning, free flowing solids
- how the atmosphere inside the confined space will be tested before and during work
- persons or other organisations that need to be informed of the work being undertaken
- the warning arrangements in place to indicate a possible change of conditions
- electrical or mechanical dangers within the confined space
- static electricity which could ignite flammable materials
- flammable and explosive materials
- hazards being introduced into the confined spaces such as welding equipment, or equipment generating dust or fumes
- protective clothing and equipment that is required
- gas monitors and their testing
- the need for cleaning and washing arrangements
- any requirement for medical surveillance
- lighting
- ventilation
- safe access and egress
- how long the work will take and how many people will be required
- barriers to protect manhole entries
- arrangements for traffic control
- communication arrangements with those inside the confined space
- safety and rescue equipment
- physical fitness of the persons carrying out the task
- manual handling requirements
- the arrangements for rescue
- first aid equipment.

Disclaimer

These example Director's Briefings are provided by Hettler Andrews for general guidance on matters of interest. In making these documents available to a general and diverse audience it is not possible to anticipate the requirements or the hazards of any subscriber's business. Users are therefore advised to carefully evaluate the contents. Hettler Andrews does not accept any liability whatsoever for injury, damage or other losses which may arise from reliance on this information and the use of these documents.

Copyright of these documents remains with Hettler Andrews and whilst subscribers are permitted to make use of them for their own purposes, permission is not granted for resale of the intellectual property to third parties.