

Tools for Life – Weekly Health & Safety Meeting



Home Healthy - Home Safe

Date: May 2023

Confined Spaces AISH 16

The U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries data indicates there are 92 fatalities in confined spaces per year, averaging almost two per week. Moreover, greater than 60% of confined space fatalities are would-be rescuers. What is a confined space? Confined spaces are defined as a space large enough to enter, has limited access and egress, and is not intended for continuous human occupancy. Examples include, but are not limited to, tanks, pits, tunnels, vaults, and boilers.

Confined spaces must be assumed to be immediately dangerous to life and health until proven otherwise. Prior to employee entry, each confined space must be evaluated, to identify current hazards and potential hazards of the space. In most cases documentation of this assessment will need to be produced and maintained on file. Some spaces may be evaluated and determined to be an "Alternate Entry Permit" confined space. Apollo Alternate Entry Permit can be used when the hazards that may be present inside the space can be 100% controlled, mitigated, and atmospheric hazards can be eliminated by forced air ventilation.

General Steps for Confined Space Work Evaluation –

- Before entering the space, the internal atmosphere shall be tested with a calibrated direct reading instrument for oxygen content, flammable gases and vapors, and potential toxic air contaminants. procedure.
- Establish the physical characteristics of the confined space.
- Determine the current and past uses of the confined space that may affect oxygen level, toxicity, or flammability of the atmosphere.
- Establish if there are any special hazards within the space, such as engulfment hazards or dangerous machinery.
- Define any operations or processes to be carried out within the space that may result in creating a more hazardous atmosphere such as welding, grinding, or removal of toxic materials.

HEALTHY OR SAFETY REMINDER: It's important to continually monitor the atmosphere with a calibrated direct reading instrument while working in a confined space. Note that when continually testing, it is imperative to test the breathing zone, defined by OSHA at the area within a ten-inch radius of the worker's face. If continuous monitoring deviates from acceptable limits, evacuate the space immediately to re-evaluate the space.

Conclusion: Do not enter a confined space until it has been evaluated and hazards have been identified and controlled. Crossing the entry threshold in any manner (even just a hand across a barrier) is entering the confined space. If you are not on the entry permit, do not enter the space. Complete and follow AISH-16A *Confined Space Entry Permit* form for all permit required confined spaces.

Discussion Points/Quiz Questions:

1. If you can't physically (whole body) enter a space, is it a confined space?
2. What other characteristics do you need for a confined space?
3. Can you create a hazard in a confined space?