

Toolbox Talk – Confined Spaces



Purpose / objectives	This talk covers the common hazards, before entry requirements, work in and emergency procedures for confined spaces
Hazards / risks	A confined space can be a hazardous environment for a variety of reasons Workers can become trapped or overcome by fumes, vapours, explosive or poisonous gases; in many cases this can lead to people dying

What is a confined space?

A confined space is a place which is substantially enclosed and includes cellars, chambers, pits, tanks, manholes, sewers, plant rooms, lofts, service tunnels and some excavations (a confined space does not have to be totally enclosed), and where serious injury could occur from hazardous substances or conditions within the space, or nearby.

Hazards and risks	Oxygen-depleted or oxygen-enriched environments.
	Suffocating, toxic or flammable atmospheres
	Actual or potentially hostile environments (e.g. inside plant)
	Biological hazards (e.g. Weil's disease from rat's urine)
	Fire, explosion, suffocation,

Before entering	Confined space work should be avoided where possible, for example, using remote controlled equipment to carry out inspection work
	A risk assessment must be carried out by a competent person. You should be briefed on the contents of the risk assessment and the control measures to be followed and used for entering, working in and exiting the confined space.
	A permit system should be used for most types of confined spaces work
	Checks should be carried out for flammable or toxic gases and oxygen content. The risk assessment should identify all potential hazards such as the different types of gas which may be present
	If breathing apparatus is required, do not enter unless you have been trained to use it
	Obey permits to work, follow procedures and check communications and monitoring equipment

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Working in confined spaces

- Work shall be controlled by a permit to work. The permit will include arrangements for rescue in an emergency.
If a rescue team is not available, the confined work will not go ahead.
No rescue team – no entry!
- You must wear all protective equipment and clothing provided.
- You should continuously monitor the air quality and fume / gas levels
- Where flammable gases may be present, only use intrinsically safe (Ex rated), electrical equipment

Emergency procedures	You must not attempt a confined space rescue unless you are part of a trained rescue team
	As a rescuer, your first duty is to ensure your own safety
	Make sure the recovery winch and other rescue equipment is working, BEFORE you attempt rescue
	You must leave the confined space immediately if told to do so
	REMEMBER: always follow the rescue plan!
	Identify the position of the nearest telephone and understand the emergency procedure

Questions

- List some hazards found in confined spaces?
- What must you check before entering a confined space?
- Name three safety points regarding confined spaces
- As a rescuer, what must you be wearing?
- What areas could be classed as confined spaces?
- What does intrinsically safe mean?

Remember:

**Never try to rescue someone unless you are part of a trained rescue team.
Use the time to get expert help and call the emergency services.**

Warning! Do not enter a confined space until the risks have been assessed!

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