



Confined Spaces Fact Sheet

What is a confined space?

A confined space is an area with limited or restricted means of entry or exit, is large enough for an employee to enter and perform assigned work, and is not designed for continuous occupancy. Confined spaces are found in many workplaces. Such spaces may include, but are not limited to, underground vaults, tanks, storage bins, pits, dikes, vessels, silos and elevator shafts

In addition, when a confined space has any of the following characteristics, it is considered permit-required confined space (PRCS):

- It contains or has the potential to contain a hazardous atmosphere.
- It contains a material that has the potential for engulfing an entrant.
- It has an internal configuration that might cause an entrant to be trapped or asphyxiated by inwardly converging walls or by a floor that slopes downward and tapers to a smaller cross section.
- It contains any other recognized serious safety or health hazards.

What are the hazards associated with a confined space?

Confinement, limited access and restricted airflow can result in hazardous conditions that would not normally arise in an open workplace. Increased risk of exposure to serious physical injury from entrapment, engulfment and hazardous atmospheric conditions can result.

What can I do to protect myself?

Make sure you know all of the appropriate procedures and precautions to take for entry into and exit from confined spaces. If there are hazardous confined spaces where you work, your employer is required to have a permit required confined space program, permit system, emergency procedures, appropriate engineering and work practice controls and to provide you with training and appropriate personal protective equipment.

Are there OSH standards for confined spaces?

Yes, the following are standards OSH has adopted for confined spaces:

- **29 CFR 1910.146** – general industry
- **29 CFR 1915, Subpart B** – shipyard employment
- **29 CFR 1917.23–25** – marine terminals
- **29 CFR 1926.21(b)(6)** – construction industry

In addition, in 29 CFR 1910, Subpart R, Special Industries, several of the industry-specific standards also address confined or enclosed spaces.

For other industry groups or employers, where there is no specific standard that can be applied, the employer has a general duty to address workplace hazards that can cause serious physical harm or death.

Where can I find additional information?

Please review our [Confined Spaces Subject Index](#) page.