

## CONFINED SPACES

### Instructions

#### Confined spaces can be deadly

A number of people are killed or seriously injured in confined spaces each year in a wide range of locations from complex plant to simple storage vessels. Those killed include people working in the space and also those who try to rescue them without proper training and equipment.

#### What is a confined space?

It can be any space of an enclosed nature where there is a risk of death or serious injury from hazardous substances or dangerous conditions. Some confined spaces are easy to identify such as storage tanks, silos or sewers. Others may be less obvious but equally dangerous e.g. combustion chambers in furnaces, ductwork or poorly ventilated rooms.

#### What are the dangers?

Dangers arise in confined spaces because of: A lack of oxygen; Poisonous gas, fume or vapour build up; Liquids/ Solids suddenly filling the space; Fire/ explosions from flammable vapours, excess oxygen; Hot conditions leading to a dangerous increase in body temperature. Some of these conditions may be present in the space but some may arise through the work being done i.e. machinery being used may produce source of ignition/dusts/vapours.

#### What does the Law say?

You must conduct a suitable & sufficient risk assessment to identify the hazards, then assess the risks & determine what precautions are needed. You will need to consider: (1) the task (2) the work environment (3) materials & tools (4) suitability of those doing the task (5) arrangements for emergency rescue. If you have identified a Confined Spaces working environment then the Confined Spaces Regulations 1997 apply Simplified, these regulations require that you:

1. Avoid entry to confined space by doing the work from outside whenever possible.
2. If entry is not avoidable, follow a safe system of work; and
3. Put in place adequate emergency arrangements including a rescue plan and equipment before the work starts.
4. Ensure only competent employees are involved in the operations.

#### How do I control the risks?

Where possible avoid the need to enter the confined space - blockages can be cleared by use of remotely operated tools; remote cameras can be used for internal inspection of vessels. If you cannot avoid entry then you **MUST** have a safe system of work for entry. This needs to consider the following elements (not exhaustive):

Provision of top man and entry supervision maintaining line-of-sight at all times.	Physical condition of the entrants	Pre-cleaning of confined spaces (purging, washing/rinsing)
Air Testing/monitoring throughout the operation/s.	Forced Air Ventilation	The need for Breathing Apparatus (full and/or 10- minute escape sets)
Emergency Rescue (do not rely on emergency services).	Rescue plan and equipment	Safe System of work including task-based PPE
Permit to work.	Activity monitoring and supervision	Inherently Safe Tools and equipment (e.g. selecting EX-Proof tools and equipment).
Training for all employees involved, task and safety based including rescue.	Equipment used outside the confined space	Safe access and egress

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**Important Notice:** Your Health & Safety Information Sheet is for guidance only. It does not replace our written Health & Safety policies and procedures and you must make sure you are fully aware of these.

**Training Courses:** For more details on our Health & Safety Training courses available, please contact our learning Zone department via email: [learningzone@shrec.org.uk](mailto:learningzone@shrec.org.uk) or visit our website: [www.shrec.org.uk](http://www.shrec.org.uk)