

Confined Spaces

OVERVIEW

Confined spaces may contain atmospheric and physical hazards that can quickly and unpredictably incapacitate individuals. Departments and employees are to follow the procedures in the University's Permit-Required Confined Space Program, which are designed to protect employees required to enter hazardous confined spaces.

The program includes:

- Identification of permit-required confined spaces
- Employee training
- Hazard assessment and control
- Permit entry procedures
- Rescue procedures

Obtain copies of the written confined space program by contacting Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S); telephone 509-335-3041.

Departments must contact EH&S to obtain permits for employee entry into permit-required confined spaces.

DEFINITIONS

Confined Space

A confined space is a space that meets *all* of the following criteria:

- Is large enough and arranged so that an employee can fully enter the space.
- Has limited or restricted entry or exit.
- Is not primarily designed for human occupancy.

Permit-Required Confined Space

A permit-required confined space is a space that meets *all* the requirements of a confined space plus one or more of the following characteristics capable of causing death or serious physical harm:

- Contains or has the potential to contain a hazardous atmosphere (i.e., air contaminants, low oxygen levels, explosive atmospheres).
- Contains a material with a potential for engulfing someone who enters the space.

Confined Spaces

Permit-Required Confined Space (cont.)

- Has an internal configuration that could allow someone entering to be trapped or asphyxiated by inwardly converging walls.
- Contains a physical hazard (i.e., electrical shock or moving parts).
- Contains any other recognized safety or health hazard that could either impair the ability to self-rescue or result in a situation that presents an immediate danger to life or health.

NOTE: A confined space can become a permit-required confined space if atmospheric and/or physical hazards are created by work activities within the space, such as chemical cleaning, painting, sealing, torch cutting, welding and other similar activities.

Examples

Examples of confined spaces and potentially permit-required confined spaces at WSU include: grain silos, utility vaults, boilers, sewage lift stations, septic tanks, air plenums and ducts, steam tunnels, sump pits, manure collection pits, and sanitary sewer manholes.

RESPONSIBILITY

Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S)

Environmental Health and Safety is responsible for:

- Managing the written permit-required confined space entry program.
- Evaluating confined spaces to identify inherent and potential hazards.
- Identifying and labeling permit-required confined spaces.
- Coordinating with units in developing confined space entry procedures.
- Conducting atmospheric monitoring.
- Providing supervisor and employee training.

Confined Spaces

Supervisors

Supervisors are responsible for:

- Notifying EH&S of confined spaces and potentially permit-required confined spaces that employees might enter.
- Ensuring that employees are trained prior to entering permit-required confined spaces.
- Ensuring that employees follow established permit-required entry procedures.
- Not entering, and not allowing employees to enter, a confined space to rescue incapacitated employees.

Employees

Employees are responsible for:

- Following permit-required confined space training.
- Following permit-required confined space entry procedures.
- Not entering a confined space to rescue incapacitated employees.

Facilities Services, Capital and Facilities Services, Operations

The departments of Facilities Services, Capital and Facilities Services, Operations are responsible for coordinating with contractors and EH&S prior to contractors' employees entering University confined spaces.

CONFINED SPACE RESCUE

Supervisors and employees are not to enter a confined space to rescue incapacitated employees. Call 911 to report confined space emergencies. The emergency dispatcher contacts trained emergency responders to perform rescue operations.

ASSISTANCE

Contact EH&S for assistance in evaluating confined spaces, establishing entry procedures and training employees; telephone 509-335-3041.