

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 Confined Space Program, which are designed to protect employees required to enter potentially hazardous confined spaces.

The program includes:

- Identification of confined spaces
- Employee training
- Hazard assessment and control
- Alternative methods entry procedures
- Permit entry procedures
- Rescue procedures

Campus EH&S Departments

Departments and employees at all WSU locations may obtain copies of the written confined space program by contacting the applicable campus Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) department:

- WSU Pullman EH&S telephone 509-335-3041
- WSU Spokane EH&S telephone 509-358-7621

WSU Spokane EH&S also provides information and assistance to WSU Health Sciences—Yakima (which includes College of Nursing—Yakima and College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences—Yakima).

- WSU Tri-Cities EH&S telephone 509-372-7163
- WSU Vancouver EH&S telephone 360-546-9706

Personnel at WSU locations not listed above may contact WSU Pullman EH&S for assistance.

Permit-Required Spaces

Departments must contact the applicable campus EH&S office to obtain permits for employee entry into permit-required confined spaces. See Campus EH&S Departments above.

WSU Spokane

WSU Spokane departments must submit post-job reviews to WSU Spokane EH&S regarding employee entry into confined spaces.

Confined Spaces

DEFINITIONS

Confined Space

A confined space is a space that meets *all* 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 continuous 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 (e.g., air contaminants, low oxygen levels, explosive atmospheres).
- Contains a material with a potential for engulfing someone who enters the space.
- Has an internal configuration that could allow someone entering to be trapped or asphyxiated by inwardly converging walls.
- Contains a physical hazard (e.g., 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 potential permit-required confined spaces at WSU include: utility tunnels, 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.

Confined Spaces

RESPONSIBILITY

Campus Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S)

Campus Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) departments are responsible for:

- Managing the confined space 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.
- Assisting departments with atmospheric monitoring upon request.
- Providing supervisor and employee training.

Supervisors

Supervisors are responsible for:

- Notifying the applicable EH&S office of confined spaces and potentially permit-required confined spaces that employees might enter. See [Campus EH&S Departments](#).
- Ensuring that employees are trained prior to entering confined spaces.
- Identifying confined space physical and atmospheric hazards and hazard controls.
- Documenting confined space entry procedures, including identified physical and atmospheric hazards and hazard controls on the alternative methods documentation form or confined space permit.
- Ensuring that employees follow established permit-required and/or alternative method entry procedures.
- Not entering, and not allowing employees to enter, a confined space to rescue incapacitated employees.

Employees

Employees are responsible for:

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

Confined Spaces

Campus Facilities Services

The campus Facilities Services departments are responsible for coordinating with contractors and the campus EH&S departments prior to contractors' employees entering University confined spaces. No contractor employees are allowed to enter any University confined spaces until the applicable requirements of *WAC* 296-809-20006 are met.

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 the campus EH&S department for assistance in evaluating confined spaces, establishing entry procedures, and training employees. See [Campus EH&S Departments](#).