



SAFETY UNLIMITED, INC.

# Weekly Safety Meeting

## Confined Spaces in Construction

Confined spaces can present conditions that are immediately dangerous to workers if not properly identified, evaluated, tested, and controlled.

OSHA has developed a new construction standard for Confined Spaces (29 CFR 1926 Subpart AA)—any space that meets the following three criteria:

- Is large enough for a worker to enter it;
- Has limited means of entry or exit; and
- Is not designed for continuous occupancy.
  - A space may also be a permit-required confined space if it has a hazardous atmosphere, the potential for engulfment or suffocation, a layout that might trap a worker through converging walls or a sloped floor, or any other serious safety or health hazard

### Fatal Incidents:

Confined space hazards have led to worker deaths. Several tragic incidents included:

Two workers suffocated while attempting to close gate valves in a valve pit.

A worker lost consciousness, fell, and was killed while climbing down a ladder into an unventilated underground valve vault to turn on water valves.

While replacing a steam-operated vertical pump, an equipment repair technician died from burns and suffocation after falling into an industrial waste pit.

### Safe Entry Requirements:

The new Confined Spaces standard includes several requirements for safe entry.

Preparation: Before workers can enter a confined space, employers must provide pre-entry planning.

This includes:

- Having a competent person evaluate the work site for the presence of confined spaces, including permit-required confined spaces;
- Once the space is classified as a permit-required confined space, identifying the means of entry and exit, proper ventilation methods, and elimination or control of all potential hazards in the space;
- Ensuring that the air in a confined space is tested, before workers enter, for oxygen levels, flammable and toxic substances, and stratified atmospheres;

- If a permit is required for the space, removing or controlling hazards in the space and determining rescue procedures and necessary equipment; and
- If the air in a space is not safe for workers, ventilating or using whatever controls or protections are necessary so that employees can safely work in the space.

### **Ongoing practices:**

After pre-entry planning, employers must ensure that the space is monitored for hazards, especially atmospheric hazards. Effective communication is important because there can be multiple contractors operating on a site, each with its own workers needing to enter the confined space. Attendants outside confined spaces must make sure that unauthorized workers do not enter them.

Rescue attempts by untrained personnel can lead to multiple deaths.

### **Training:**

The new Confined Spaces standard requires employers to ensure that their workers know about the existence, location, and dangers posed by each permit-required confined space, and that they may not enter such spaces without authorization.

Employers must train workers involved in permit-required confined space operations so that they can perform their duties safely and understand the hazards in permit spaces and the methods used to isolate, control, or protect workers from these hazards. Workers not authorized to perform entry rescues must be trained on the dangers of attempting such rescues.

### **Remember:**

A confined space has limited openings for entry or exit, Is large enough for entering and working, And Is not designed for continuous worker occupancy. Confined spaces include underground vaults, tanks, storage bins, manholes, pits, silos, underground utility vaults and pipelines.

- Do not enter permit-required confined spaces without being trained and without having a permit to enter.
- Review, understand and follow employer's procedures before entering permit-required confined spaces, and know how and when to exit.

**Safety is a frame of mind...so concentrate on it...all the time!!**

