



# Weekly Safety Meeting

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## Defining Confined Spaces

Many workplaces contain spaces that are “confined” because their configurations hinder the activities of employees who must enter into, work in, or exit from them.

In many instances, employees who work in confined spaces also face increased risk of exposure to serious physical injury from hazards such as entrapment, engulfment, and hazardous atmospheric conditions.

Many times, employees find themselves in a space that they may not realize is consider a confined space!

A confined space is defined by OSHA as a space that meets the following three criteria:

- Is large enough and configured such that an employee can bodily enter and perform work; and
- Has limited means of entry (access) and exit (egress), which means you need to use your hands or contort your body to enter the space; and
- Is not designed for continuous employee occupancy.

## What Are the Standard Requirements to Define Confined Space?

What does the Standard mean by “Large Enough”?

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Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) believes that the final rule’s definition properly places the focus on the design of the space, which is the key to whether a human can occupy the space under normal operating conditions.

American National Standard Institute (ANSI Z117. 1-1995)

“Restricted entry and exit mean physical impediment of the body, e.g., use of the hands or a contortion of the body to enter into or exit from the confined space”.

## What Does the Standard Mean by “Limited Opening”?

Openings are usually limited by size or where they are located:

They are usually small and difficult to enter through.

This makes it very difficult to get in wearing safety equipment and challenging to get needed equipment in and out of the space.

In some cases, the space may be large and deep, requiring the use of ladders or lifting devices.

Escape from confined spaces can be difficult.

Most confined spaces are designed to hold substances such as liquids, gases, and loose materials, or to house equipment.

They come in many sizes and shapes, though most can be classified in one of two ways:

- Those with depth and open tops; and
- Those with narrow openings.

## **What Does the Standard Mean by “Continuous Occupancy”?**

Most confined spaces are not designed to be entered or worked in on a routine basis.

They are designed to store products, enclose systems, or transport materials. Therefore, it can be extremely dangerous for workers to enter to perform clean-up or maintenance in these spaces.

## **What Does the Standard Mean by “Entering Confined Spaces”?**

According to OSHA "Entry" means the action by which a person passes through an opening into a “permit-required confined space.”

Entry is considered to have occurred as soon as any part of the entrant's body breaks the plane of an opening into the space.

Entering a confined space may be done for various reasons:

- It is done usually to perform a necessary function, such as inspection, repair, maintenance (cleaning or painting), or similar operations that would be an infrequent or irregular function of the total industrial activity.
- Entry may also be made during new construction.
- One of the most difficult confined space entries to control is that of unauthorized entry, especially when there are large numbers of workers and trades involved, such as welders, painters, electricians, and safety monitors.
- A final and most important reason for entry would be emergency rescue.

This, and all other reasons for entry, must be well planned before initial entry is made and the hazards must be thoroughly reviewed.

## **What Does the Standard Mean by “Acceptable Entry Conditions”?**

These are the conditions that must exist in a space to allow entry and to ensure that the employees involved with a confined space entry can safely enter into and work within the space.

All confined spaces are considered permit-required until they can be declassified as a confined space (until it can be shown that, through engineering, that the hazards are no longer present).

Removing all hazards can reclassify a permit-required confined space to a non-permit required confined space.

## What Does the Standard Mean by “Permit Confined Space”?

The terms “permit-required confined space” and “permit space” refer to spaces that meet OSHA’s definition of a “confined space” and contain health or safety hazards.

For this reason, OSHA requires workers to have a permit to enter these spaces.

The standard is based on a performance-oriented approach, which is designed to provide employers with the flexibility of achieving compliance through a proactive system specific to their worksite.

By definition, a permit-required confined space is a space that meets the criteria for a confined space and has one or more of the following characteristics:

- Contains, or has the potential to contain, a hazardous atmosphere;
- Contains a material with the potential to engulf someone who enters the space;
- 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; or
- Contains any other recognized serious safety or health hazards.

## What Does the Standard Mean by “Non-Permit Confined Space”?

A confined space that does not contain or, with respect to atmospheric hazards, have the potential to contain any hazard capable of causing death or serious physical harm.

The atmosphere in the space is of utmost concern. If the air does not move freely in and out of a confined space, the atmosphere may become oxygen deficient or toxic to humans.

Remember, recognizing that we are entering a confined space is only the first part!

***CONFINED SPACES CAN BE MORE DANGEROUS THAN THEY LOOK!***

