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Weekly Safety Meeting

Confined Space Rescue Plans

Confined spaces are areas that contain or have the potential to contain a hazardous atmosphere, have limited means of entry and exit, and although they are large enough for a worker to fit, they are not designed for continuous occupancy. Confined spaces require permits to enter due to their inherent risks. Confined spaces include tanks, silos, pipelines, manholes, and tunnels, just to name a few examples.

When a workplace has a confined space, the employer must have a confined space rescue plan in place. This is a multi-step process that should be well thought out before anyone attempts to enter the confined space. Steps to prepare this plan include assessing hazards, creating an extraction plan, purchasing and preparing the tools and equipment in case of an emergency, and performing practice drills. Lastly, the plan should be in writing.

Hazard Assessment

The first step in developing this plan is taking a close look at the work environment and assessing the known potential hazards in the confined space. A silo full of grain poses a physical engulfment hazard for anyone standing on the grain. A container containing chlorine creates a chemical hazard in that confined space. Other hazards may include atmospheric hazards, electrocution, flooding, poor lighting, and fall hazards.

Extraction Plan

The second step in developing the rescue plan is to anticipate what type of rescue could reasonably work, according to the nature of the physical, chemical, or other hazards found. These procedures should include entry and exit into and out of the confined spaces, devices that will be used to communicate the situation from inside to outside, and methods to extract the worker from the confined space. If someone cleaning the inside of a tank is unresponsive, the rescue team should send in another person or persons to get them, but rescuers should have full safety precautions so as not to become victims themselves.

Calling 911 is not a confined space rescue plan. Specialized knowledge and equipment is necessary to perform this operation, so planning must be done in advance. If 911 is called, they should be briefed on all hazards and equipment needed to rescue personnel.

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Purchase Necessary Rescue Equipment & PPE

The third step in developing the plan is to determine the exact equipment to be used in the rescue and to make sure that is it sufficient for the rescue team. Necessary equipment should be purchased and kept near the confined space; it might include atmospheric monitors, fall protection equipment, extraction equipment, and respirators. For example, for entering a tank where there are chemical vapors, the rescue team might use Level B HazMat suits with SCBA respirators and walkie-talkies to reach the victim and enter and exit by means of a ladder. They might need to hoist the victim using a crane from outside and a full body harness.

Drills and Simulations

After these steps, the equipment should be procured and tested in non-life-threatening environments with the team. Drills should be done to prepare and practice simulations of all potential incidents in the confined space.

Written Plan

The confined space rescue plan should be in writing, with as much detailed information as possible about the confined space. This includes SDS sheets of the materials inside, if applicable, and details of the levels of protective gear necessary in a worst-case scenario.

A WRITTEN CONFINED SPACE WRITTEN PLAN IS A MUST…911 ISN'T A RESCUE PLAN!

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Safety Meeting Sign-In Sheet

Supervisor:	Subject:
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Name (print clearly)	Signature	Comments / Safety Concerns / Training Requests