

## Is 911 your Confined Space Rescue Plan?

Permit-required confined spaces can present conditions that are immediately dangerous to workers' lives or health if not properly identified, evaluated, tested and controlled.

OSHA has developed a standard for Confined Spaces in Construction ([29 CFR 1926 Subpart AA](#)) for any space that meets all of the following criteria:

- Is large enough for a worker to enter;
- Has limited means of entry or exit; and
- Is not designed for continuous occupancy.

One provision of the standard requires employers to develop and implement procedures for summoning rescue or emergency services in permit-required confined spaces. An employer who relies on local emergency services for assistance is required to meet the requirements of [§1926.1211 — Rescue and emergency services](#).

OSHA recognizes that not all rescue services or emergency responders are trained and equipped to conduct confined space rescues. When employers identify an off-site rescue service, it is critical that the rescuers can protect their employees. The emergency services should be familiar with the exact site location, types of permit-required confined spaces and the necessary rescue equipment.

### For Employers

Calling emergency responders to provide rescue services can be a suitable way of providing for rescues in a permit-required confined space. Pre-planning will ensure that the emergency service is capable, available and prepared.

Prior to the start of the rescue work operation, employers must evaluate prospective emergency responders and select one that has:

- Adequate equipment for rescues, such as: atmospheric monitors, fall protection, extraction equipment, and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) for the particular permit-required confined spaces.



Photo: Oregon OSHA

*Emergency service workers perform a practice rescue inside a manhole.*

- The ability to respond and conduct a rescue in a timely manner based on the site conditions and is capable of conducting a rescue if faced with potential hazards specific to the space. Such hazards may include:
  - Atmospheric hazards (e.g., flammable vapors, low oxygen)
  - Electrocutation (e.g., unprotected, energized wires)
  - Flooding or engulfment potential
  - Poor lighting
  - Fall hazards
  - Chemical hazards
- Agreed to notify the employer in the event that the rescue team becomes unavailable.

Employers must also:

- Inform the emergency responders of potential hazards when they are called to perform a rescue at the worksite; and

- Provide emergency responders with access to all permit-required confined spaces. Such access may include:
  - Information on access routes, gates or landmarks
  - A project site plan if necessary
  - GPS coordinates if in a remote location

Additionally, employers should ensure that:

- The most efficient means to contact emergency responders is available;
- Any changes to the project site conditions are communicated to the rescue service; and
- Emergency responders are willing to visit the site and conduct a joint training exercise with the employer.

### For Emergency Service Providers

Permit-required confined space emergencies can threaten workers' safety and health. Talking with the employer about the hazards they might encounter will assist in preparing for the situation. The following are some questions responders should be able to answer when an employer requests their services:

- Are you able to respond and conduct a rescue in a timely manner based on the site conditions?
- Do you have the appropriate equipment for response and rescue, such as: atmospheric monitors, fall protection, extraction equipment, and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) for the particular permit-required confined spaces?
- Are you prepared for the hazards the employer has identified?
  - Atmospheric hazards (e.g., flammable vapors, low oxygen)
  - Electrocution (e.g., unprotected, energized wires)
  - Flooding or engulfment potential
  - Poor lighting
  - Fall hazards
  - Chemical hazards

- Are you trained for the hazards identified by the employer?
  - Hazard Communication training (HAZCOM)
  - Respiratory Protection training
  - Hazardous Material training
  - HAZWOPER training
  - Hazard recognition
  - Can you cope with other hazards the company may have identified on the site?
  - Do you need to develop a new procedure for these hazards/conditions?
- Has the employer provided you with the **exact** location of the work site?
  - Information on access routes, gates or landmarks
  - A project site plan if necessary
  - GPS coordinates if in a remote location
- Can you visit the site and hold a practice rescue?
- Does the company know the best way to contact you?
- How would the company communicate any changes to site conditions throughout the project?
- Could other emergencies or group training preclude you from responding and how will that be communicated?

OSHA encourages all emergency service providers to work closely with employers who request their services for permit-required confined space rescues. Pre-rescue planning, communication, and effective coordination of rescue activities are critical in the event that a life-threatening incident should occur.

Private sector commercial emergency service providers are covered by Federal OSHA and must comply with the provisions of [§1926.1211](#). Similarly, state and local government emergency service providers in a state with an OSHA approved state plan must comply with these requirements. See [www.osha.gov/dcsp/osp](http://www.osha.gov/dcsp/osp) for information on state-plan requirements.

For more information on confined spaces in construction, visit OSHA's website at: [www.osha.gov/confinedspaces](http://www.osha.gov/confinedspaces).

## Workers' Rights

Workers have the right to:

- Working conditions that do not pose a risk of serious harm.
- Receive information and training (in a language and vocabulary the worker understands) about workplace hazards, methods to prevent them, and the OSHA standards that apply to their workplace.
- Review records of work-related injuries and illnesses.
- File a complaint asking OSHA to inspect their workplace if they believe there is a serious hazard or that their employer is not following OSHA's rules. OSHA will keep all identities confidential.

- Exercise their rights under the law without retaliation, including reporting an injury or raising health and safety concerns with their employer or OSHA. If a worker has been retaliated against for using their rights, they must file a complaint with OSHA as soon as possible, but no later than 30 days.

For more information, see [OSHA's Workers page](#).

## How to Contact OSHA

For questions or to get information or advice, to report an emergency, fatality, inpatient hospitalization, amputation, or loss of an eye, or to file a confidential complaint, contact your nearest OSHA office, visit [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov) or call OSHA at 1-800-321-OSHA (6742), TTY 1-877-889-5627.

**This is one in a series of informational fact sheets highlighting OSHA programs, policies or standards. It does not impose any new compliance requirements. For a comprehensive list of compliance requirements of OSHA standards or regulations, refer to Title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations. This information will be made available to sensory-impaired individuals upon request. The voice phone is (202) 693-1999; teletypewriter (TTY) number: (877) 889-5627.**

**For assistance, contact us. We can help. It's confidential.**



**[www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov) (800) 321-OSHA (6742)**



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## Permit-Required Confined Spaces



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. See 29 CFR 1910.146.

Permit-required confined spaces are confined spaces that:

- May contain a hazardous or potentially hazardous atmosphere.
- May contain a material which can engulf an entrant.
- May contain walls that converge inward or floors that slope downward and taper into a smaller area which could trap or asphyxiate an entrant.
- May contain other serious physical hazards such as unguarded machines or exposed live wires.
- Must be identified by the employer who must inform exposed employees of the existence and location of such spaces and their hazards.

### What to Do

- 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.
- Before entry, identify any physical hazards.
- Before and during entry, test and monitor for oxygen content, flammability, toxicity or explosive hazards as necessary.
- Use employer's fall protection, rescue, air-monitoring, ventilation, lighting and communication equipment according to entry procedures.
- Maintain contact at all times with a trained attendant either visually, via phone, or by two-way radio. This monitoring system enables the attendant and entry supervisor to order you to evacuate and to alert appropriately trained rescue personnel to rescue entrants when needed.

**You have a right to a safe workplace.**

**If you have questions about workplace safety and health, call OSHA.  
It's confidential. We can help!**



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**For more information:**  
**OSHA<sup>®</sup> Occupational Safety and Health Administration**  
**[www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov) (800) 321-OSHA (6742)**