

C: OPERATIONS STANDARDS

C5. CONFINED SPACES

1.0 Scope

1.1 **Confined space** is an enclosed or partially enclosed space that:

- (a) Has been identified as such in a risk assessment;
- (b) Is not intended or designed primarily as place of work;
- (c) May have restricted entry and exit; and,
- (d) May:
 - (i) Have an atmosphere which contains potentially harmful levels of contaminant;
 - (ii) Not have a safe level of oxygen e.g. following a nitrogen purge; or
 - (iii) Cause entrapment or engulfment.

1.2 Confined spaces may include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Storage tanks, process vessels, boilers, pressure vessels, tank-like compartments that have only a manhole for entry, ceiling and floor spaces;
- (b) Open-topped spaces such as pits, or grease traps, or excavations more than 1.5 metres deep;
- (c) Pipes, pumps, sewers, shafts, ducts, drains, tunnels, cellars, basements and similar structures; and,
- (d) Abandoned workings and exploration adits.

1.3 **Contaminant** is any dust, fume, mist, vapour, gas, or other substance in liquid or solid form, the presence of which may be harmful to health and safety.

1.4 **Entry to confined space** occurs when a person's whole body, upper body or head is within the confined space. However, this is not intended to prevent a person from inserting their hand or arm while holding a test instrument or probe into a confined space as part of the evaluation procedure provided that this procedure is duly authorised.

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2.0 Identification

2.1 Confined spaces must be identified and signs erected at the entry points denoting that a permit is required prior to entry. Where signage is impractical, for example with adits other means of highlighting the dangers need to be used.

3.0 Permit System

3.1 Entry to a confined space must only be allowed after a written approval, in the form of a permit, has been issued by a competent person, whom is authorised to issue such permits.

3.2 The permitting process must include the following elements:

- (a) a risk assessment, including the need for a competent person to assess such things as oxygen levels, contaminants, temperature extremes, and concentrations of flammable substances;
- (b) isolation procedures for contaminants and other energy sources;
- (c) the requirement for breathing apparatus;
- (d) the sign-in and sign-out of all persons entering the confined space;
- (e) display of the permit;
- (f) communication equipment;
- (g) safety specification of equipment to be taken into the confined space;
- (h) barricading;
- (i) rescue plan and equipment;
- (j) standby person; and,
- (k) a completion procedure.

4.0 Other Requirements

4.1 All persons required to work in a confined space, or to act as a standby person, must be trained, competent and tested.

4.2 Specific safe work procedures must be developed for work activities that are more hazardous when carried out in a confined space than elsewhere. These activities would include hot work (cutting and welding), chemical cleaning, steam cleaning, and abrasive blasting.

4.3 The standby person will have no other duties and is to be positioned outside the confined space entry point at all times while personnel are within the space.

4.4 Where the risk assessment has identified the need for ventilation, then this must be covered by a documented procedure.