Confined Spaces

**Definition**

**OSHA defines non-permit-required confined spaces as:**

1) large enough for an employee to enter fully and perform assigned work; 2) not designed for continuous occupancy by the employee; and 3) has a limited or restricted means of entry or exit (these spaces may include underground vaults, tanks, storage bins, pits and diked areas, vessels, silos and other similar areas).

**OSHA defines permit-required confined spaces as those having one or more of the following characteristics:**

1) contains or has the potential to contain a hazardous atmosphere; 2) contains a material with the potential to engulf someone who enters the space; 3) 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; and/or 4) contains any other recognized serious safety or health hazards.

To ensure the safety of all personnel involved including an authorized entrant and an authorized attendant it is necessary to use appropriate warning signs and written protocols. Personnel must understand the hazards associated with confined spaces, their modes of exposure and effects, how to detect them, how to communicate them, how to control them and how to use personal protective equipment.

Employers must take effective measures to prevent employees from entering confined spaces unless they have been properly trained and equipped. In case of permitted confined spaces employers must develop a written permit space program and make it available to employees or their representatives.

For additional resources, contact your local OSHA branch, or refer to the online OSHA manual concerning Confined Spaces at: U.S. Department of Labor. Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Permit-Required Confined Spaces. OSHA 3138. [http://www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3138.pdf](http://www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3138.pdf)

In case of life-threatening emergencies, notify OSHA at (800) 321 OSHA. The nearest area or state office will field the call for help.