

Definition

List confined spaces on site

In general construction, confined spaces include vaults, maintenance holes, tanks, and other spaces that meet the criteria of the definition.

Physical hazards such as live electrical conductors, operating equipment, stored energy, pressurized pipes, noise, and heat sources must be controlled in confined spaces through lockout and tagging. You must also control other dangers, including those you may introduce into the space by the work being performed. Such hazards include hazardous dusts, chemical vapours, engine exhaust, and welding fumes.

Other spaces that don't fall under the definition of confined space but need to be assessed and controlled include

- trenches and excavations
- basements
- halls
- small rooms.

These spaces must be adequately ventilated to ensure hazardous materials and atmospheres are not present and do not accumulate from the work being performed. Workers have been overcome and killed by solvent and adhesive vapours in small, poorly ventilated rooms.

Explain dangers

The hazards of working in confined spaces are often not recognized until it's too late. For example:

- Four workers died from hydrogen sulphide poisoning in a sewage holding tank.
- A worker was killed by carbon monoxide gas from a gasoline-powered pump used to drain a pit.
- A worker was caught in a mixing tank which was inadvertently started while he was inside.

Identify controls

"Confined space" means a fully or partially enclosed space

- that is not both designed and constructed for continuous human occupancy, and
- in which atmospheric hazards may occur because of its construction, location, or contents, or because of work that is done in it.

In chemical and petrochemical plants, confined spaces include tanks, vessels, pipes, sumps, and pits. Confined spaces in heavy industrial plants can be roasters, digesters, mixers, bins, and conveyors.

Sewage-handling and water-treatment plants include various kinds of confined spaces, from settling and holding tanks to maintenance holes and wells below floor level.

Demonstrate

Identify confined spaces on the project with the crew. Discuss potential dangers.