

# Toolbox Talk

## Confined Spaces



Every entry into a confined space is potentially **dangerous**. Some confined spaces are easy to identify (such as closed tanks and sewers), others are less obvious but may be equally as dangerous (open-topped tanks or structures that can become confined during their manufacture. A space may be classified as confined because access is difficult.

**Seek specialist advice and assistance when considering working in a confined space.**

### Specified Risks:

- Serious injury from fire or explosion.
- Loss of consciousness to any person arising from increased body temperature.
- Loss of consciousness or asphyxiation arising from gas, fumes, vapour or lack of oxygen.
- Drowning from an increase of water levels.
- Asphyxiation or entrapment from solids falling such as subsidence.

### Potential Solutions:

**Wherever possible, you should avoid carrying out tasks in confined spaces.**

**If this is not possible then you should assess the risks of that particular space and put in precautionary measures to control those risks.**

- If a confined space has noxious fumes, you should consider how these can be ventilated or removed.
- If there is a risk of liquids or gases flooding in, you should establish whether the valves can be locked shut.
- If someone is going into a confined space test the atmosphere before entry and if there is not enough oxygen to breathe properly, you must provide breathing apparatus or ventilate the space to increase oxygen levels before entering.
- If there is a chance of disturbing silt and releasing gas, the atmosphere should be monitored.

You should have emergency arrangements where necessary. If someone is working in a confined space, think about the following:

- How will you know they are okay and haven't been overcome by fumes?
- How will you access them if something were to go wrong?

### Do's and Don'ts:

#### Do

- Be associated with all the risks that come with confined spaces.
- Make arrangements to ventilate the confined space and check the atmosphere before entry.
- Establish an emergency procedure.
- Establish a Permit to Work system.
- Make sure the person in the confined space is competent and trained in the use of the emergency equipment and understands the emergency procedure.
- Carry out a full risk assessment prior to starting the job.

#### Don't

- Work in the confined space unless it is necessary and all other options have been looked into.

### Examples of Confined Spaces:

- Storage tanks
- Silos
- Reaction vessels
- Enclosed drains
- Sewers.

Others may be less obvious, but can be equally dangerous, for example:

- Open-topped chambers, such as empty lock chambers
- Vats
- Combustion chambers in furnaces etc
- Ductwork
- Unventilated or poorly ventilated rooms
- Excavation trench
- Cellars and roof spaces.