

What is a Confined Space?

The new Confined Space Regulations come into effect on September 30, 2006.

The employer is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and its **regulations** are complied with in the workplace.

Confined space provisions are found in the sector regulations listed below:

- 1) **O. Reg. 631/05 amending the Regulation for Health Care and Residential Facilities, O. Reg. 67/93 (Section 43)**
- 2) O. Reg. 629/05 amending the Regulation for Industrial Establishments, O. Reg. 851 (Section 119)
- 3) O. Reg. 628/05 amending the Regulation for Construction Projects, O. Reg. 213/91 (Section 221)
- 4) O. Reg. 630/05 amending the Regulation for Mines and Mining Plants, O. Reg. 854 (Section 294)
- 5) O. Reg. 632/05, Regulation for Confined Spaces is a new regulation for confined spaces for most other workplaces that are covered by the OHSA but not by one of the specific sector regulations.

All five regulations are similar however, the confined space provisions for construction projects contain more variations.

New Definition of confined spaces

The definition of “confined space” is consistent across all 5 regulations.

A “confined space” means a fully or partially enclosed space,

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

Both two conditions – (a) and (b) – must apply. The employer must determine through evaluation whether any space meets the definition of a “confined space”.

What is meant by “not both designed and constructed for continuous human occupancy”?

Some examples are:

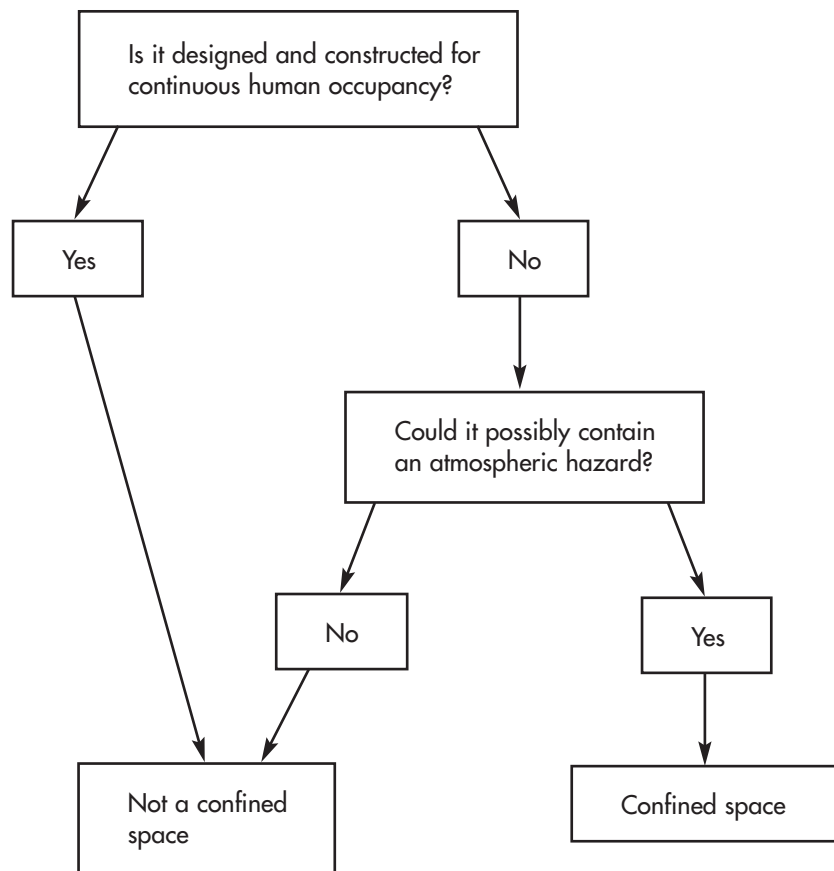
- Storage tanks, boilers, pressure vessels, vats, bins and other tank-like compartments usually having only a manhole for entry
- Open-topped spaces more than 1.2 m deep, such as a pump well, pit or degreaser
- Pipes, sewers ducts and similar structures
- Cargo tanks, cellular double-bottom tanks, and oil tanks and void spaces
- Flues, chimneys, ovens or furnaces
- Elevator rooms
- Mechanical rooms
- Crawl spaces near a compressor in a mechanical room

If atmospheric hazards are present in these spaces, then the space would be classified as a confined space.

What is an “atmospheric hazard”?

- a) The accumulation of flammable, combustible or explosive agents. An oxygen content in the atmosphere that is less than 19.5 per cent or more than 23 per cent by volume
- b) The accumulation of atmospheric contaminants, including gases, vapours, fumes, dusts or mists, that could,
 - i. result in acute health effects that pose an immediate threat to life
 - ii. interfere with a person’s ability to escape unaided from a confined space

DECISION TREE



For further details on employer responsibilities within the new confined space regulations, please see the Fast Fact titled “Confined Spaces: Employer Responsibilities.”



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