

Confined Spaces – Employer Responsibilities

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. The new confined space regulations outline very specific expectations for employers. All facilities will be held accountable for having addressed all necessary aspects of this regulation by September 30, 2006.

Employer Responsibilities under the New Confined Space Regulation

Multiple employers entering the same space:

Where workers from more than one employer will work in the same confined space (contract work), the lead employer must prepare a coordination document.

Written program:

The employer must have a written program that addresses:

- How to recognize a confined space
- How to assess hazards
- Development of one or more plans
- Worker training
- Entry permit system

Hazard assessment:

A written report outlining the hazards found in the confined space, or hazards that may be produced by the work being performed in the confined space, must be completed. The assessment must be completed by someone with adequate knowledge and the report must include the name, address and qualifications of the assessor.

Entry plan:

An entry plan must be developed for each confined space and must be based on the findings of the hazard assessment. The plan must outline the duties and actions required to ensure worker safety within the confined space. A plan may deal with more than one confined space if the spaces are similar in construction and pose the same hazards.

Training:

All workers entering the confined space or performing related work must have adequate training. The training must be provided by a person with adequate knowledge, training and experience. Written records of training must be maintained.

Entry permit:

An entry permit outlining hazard controls must be completed before any worker enters the confined space or performs related work. Section 43.8(2) in the Health Care Regulation outlines the information required on an entry permit. A separate entry permit is necessary each time work is to be performed in a confined space and before any worker enters the confined space.

Rescue:

Trained rescue personnel and equipment must be available and ready to immediately implement the written on-site rescue procedures each time a confined space is entered.

Personal protective equipment (PPE):

Workers must be provided with adequate PPE and procedures to control for other hazards that may be present or become present while the worker is within the confined space, such as the release of hazardous substances into the confined space, contact with electrical energy within the confined space, contact with moving parts of equipment, drowning, engulfment, entrapment, suffocation and other hazards from free-flowing material.

Attendant:

An attendant must be assigned and in position outside or near the confined space during confined space entry. The attendant may never enter the confined space, must remain in contact with the workers inside the space and have a means to summon help if necessary.

Air testing:

Atmospheric testing is required when the assessment determines that the confined space may contain atmospheric hazards. The testing must be completed before and while the worker is in a confined space. Some hazards of concern include:

- Oxygen content below or above the acceptable range of 19.5 to 23 per cent by volume
- The potential accumulation of flammable, combustible or explosive agents
- The accumulation of atmospheric contaminants

Written records:

The following written documents are required and must be maintained for at least one year from their creation, or until there are two more recent sets of documents on file:

1. Coordination document
2. Confined Space program
3. Confined Space assessment
4. Confined Space plan
5. Training records
6. Entry permit
7. On-site rescue procedures
8. Rescue equipment inspection records
9. Air testing results

For further details on defining a confined space, please also see the Fast Fact, What Is a Confined Space?



The information contained in Fast Facts is correct at the time of publication.

The Fast Facts series is copyrighted by the Ontario Safety Association for Community Healthcare (OSACH). Individual Fast Facts can be copied freely provided appropriate credit is given to OSACH.

For more information, please contact:

Ontario Safety Association for Community & Healthcare

4950 Yonge Street, Suite 1505, Toronto, Ontario Canada M2N 6K1

Tel. (416) 250-7444 • Toll Free 1-877-250-7444 • Fax (416) 250-7484 • Web Site: www.osach.ca

1-894878-35-3 FCNFE150 • 09/06