



FACTSHEET 5.2 – Hazardous Work – Confined Spaces

Confined Spaces

WHS Regulations Part 4.3

To help determine if a space is a confined space, the following questions should be considered:

Q1: Is the space not designed or intended primarily to be occupied by a person, and is it at (or designed or intended to be at) atmospheric pressure while any person is in the space? E.g., some spaces that may have atmospheric contaminants are still designed for entry (e.g. spray painting booths)

If yes, this may be confined space – go to Q2. If no, it is not a confined space.

Q2: Is the space likely to be a risk to health and safety from:

- An atmosphere that does not have a safe oxygen level; or
- Contaminants that may cause injury from fire or explosion (e.g. airborne gases, dusts or vapours); or
- Harmful concentrations of any airborne contaminants; or
- Engulfment (e.g. grain in a silo).

If yes to any of these, it is a confined space.

Entry to a confined space is where a person's head or upper body is in the confined space or within the boundary of a confined space. The PCBU is required to **re-check the status of a space** over time as it may become a confined space.

A confined space entry permit:

- Is required to enter a confined space and must be completed by a competent person; and
- entry is not permitted until a permit has been issued.

Signage:

- Suitable signage is required at all stages of work involving confined space entry.

Communication and monitoring:

- **Continuous communication** with the outside and **monitoring of conditions** are required.

Specific controls are required relating to:

- Connected plant and services – contaminants may enter or the space may become energised;
- Atmosphere – requires purging, ventilation and safe oxygen levels;
- Atmospheric exposure standards – when exceeded respiratory equipment is required;
- Flammable gases and vapours – concentrations relating to the LEL (lower explosion limit); and
- Fire and explosion – requires identification and exclusion of potential ignition sources.

Emergency Procedures:

The PCBU must:

- establish emergency and rescue procedure and practice those procedures;
- ensure that entry and exits are large enough to allow emergency access and remain unobstructed; and
- plant, equipment and PPE provided for first aid or emergency rescue is maintained.

Record keeping is required by the PCBU of:

- **training including emergency training** (2 years);
- **risk assessments**; and
- confined space entry permits
- Risk assessments and confined space entry permits must be kept until work is completed; if a notifiable incident occurs during the work they must be held for 2 years.