



## Toolbox Talk: Confined Space Awareness

### **Introduction/Overview:**

Anyone working in or exposed to a confined space, either permit-required or non-permit required, should be aware of the potential hazards. Most agencies of the Commonwealth do not allow employees to enter permit-required confined spaces. However, if confined spaces exist on the agency's property, agency employees should be aware of the hazards that confined spaces may contain.

### **Statistics:**

According to an article by Chris Koester in Occupational Health and Safety magazine entitled, "We Must Change the Statistics of Confined Space Injuries and Fatalities," approximately 2.1 million workers enter permit-required confined spaces (PRCS) annually. Mr. Koester stated that, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), around 60% of fatalities that occur in confined spaces are rescuers.

### **Talking Points:**

All PRCS in places of employment must be labeled and secured so unauthorized employees cannot enter the space.

Understanding the dangers and what a confined space is will help your employees understand the importance of not entering a confined space and to report unlabeled and unsecured confined spaces.

A confined space must meet all three of the following criteria:

- Limited access in and out of the space;
- A space a worker can fit in to conduct work; and
- A space that is not intended for continuous human occupancy.

A PRCS is a space that has hazards that will injure or create a fatality. The following are hazards that must be addressed before entering a PRCS:

- Atmospheric hazards
  - Low or high oxygen concentration
  - Flammable gases
  - Toxic gases
- Danger of engulfment;
- An internal configuration that may cause a worker to get wedged inside;
- Any recognizable hazard.

Developed by:

Before employees can enter into a PRCs, specialized training must be accomplished as outlined in the 29 CFR 1910.146 standards. This standard, along with the agency's Permit-Required Confined Space program, must be adhered to before any entry is allowed.

**Additional Discussion Notes:**

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**Final Thoughts:**

Knowledgeable employees will be less likely to enter or allow others to enter a confined space. If entering a confined space is part of your job, never enter the space if:

- You have not been trained;
- The appropriate equipment is not available; or
- Procedures are not followed.

If entering confined spaces is not part of your job, then never enter a confined space. If you come across spaces that are not secured or identified, and you believe it is a confined space, then report it to your supervisor.

If you would like more information on confined spaces, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has more information at the following weblink:

<https://www.osha.gov/confined-spaces>

As always, the staff at LCI is ready to assist you with any questions you have. Our contact information is listed below.

**NOTE:** Always promote discussion with the attendees. If a question comes up that no one in attendance can answer, please contact OWC or the Loss Control Innovations consultants for assistance.

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**References:**

Confined Space Statistics

<https://ohsonline.com/articles/2018/08/01/we-must-change-the-statistics-of-confined-space-injuries-and-fatalities.aspx>

For More Information on Confined Spaces

<https://www.osha.gov/confined-spaces>