

# Confined Spaces

## Code of Practice Fact Sheet



Government  
of South Australia  
SafeWork SA

The *Code of Practice – Confined Spaces* is available on the SafeWork SA website at [safework.sa.gov.au](http://safework.sa.gov.au). This fact sheet provides a summary of that Code.

Confined spaces are commonly found in tanks, ducts, flues, chimneys, containers or other similar enclosed or partially enclosed structures. They pose dangers because they are usually not designed to be areas where people work. The hazards are not always obvious and may change with each entry into the confined space.

Refer to pages 4, 7 and 8 of the Code for more information on how a confined space is defined and the risks associated with confined spaces.

Refer to page 32 of the Code for a confined space criteria checklist to assist in determining whether a space is a confined space.

### Risk management

Managing the risks associated with confined spaces involves the following simple risk management approach:

1. Identify hazards associated with confined spaces
2. Assess the risks
3. Eliminate or minimise the risks by implementing control measures
4. Review control measures to ensure they are effective.

Refer to pages 11-28 of the Code for more information.

#### 1. Identifying hazards

Identifying hazards involves finding all of the things and situations that could potentially cause harm to people. For example, whether the entry or exit is restricted, the types of work activities being undertaken in the space, any potentially harmful airborne contaminants in the space or any other hazard.

To identify hazards associated with confined spaces it may also be useful to consult your workers, review any safety information (e.g. technical standards or other information) and, if relevant, find out previous uses for the space.

Refer to pages 11-14 of the Code for more information.

#### 2. Assessing the risks

A risk assessment involves considering what could happen if someone is exposed to a hazard and the likelihood of it happening. For example, if substances were previously stored in the confined space where workers are to conduct maintenance, what effect would that have on the likelihood or consequence of an explosion?

A risk assessment must be done for risks associated with all identified hazards of a confined space. A confined space entry permit may be used as a record of the risk assessment.

Refer to pages 15-17 of the Code for more information.

#### 3. Control measures

When choosing the most appropriate control measure, the following hierarchy of controls must be considered:

- eliminate the risk e.g. carry out the work from outside the space
- substitute the risk, isolate the risk or apply engineering controls e.g. consider the nature of a confined space and the internal atmosphere
- use administrative controls e.g. safe work practices
- use PPE.

A combination of these controls may be required in order to adequately manage and control the risks.

Refer to pages 18-28 of the Code for more information.

#### 4. Review of control measures

Control measures that have been implemented must be reviewed and, if necessary, revised to make sure they work as planned and to maintain, so far as is reasonably practicable, a work environment that is without risks to health and safety.

Control measures may be reviewed using the same methods as the initial hazard identification step.

Refer to page 31 of the Code for more information, including questions to ask when reviewing controls. For example, is any change planned to any plant or structure that may create a confined space or change the nature of an existing confined space?

## Confined space entry permit

Confined space entry permits must be completed by a competent person. They provide a formal check, in writing, to ensure all elements of a safe system of work are in place before people enter the confined space, and confirmation that those people have left the space when work has been completed.

Because of the significant risks associated with confined spaces, workers must not enter a confined space without a confined space entry permit, even to conduct the initial hazard identification or risk assessment.

Refer to pages 20-21 of the Code for more information and page 33 of the Code for a sample of a confined space entry permit.

## Emergency procedures

Due to the risks of exposure to serious and immediate danger if something was to go wrong in a confined space, it is essential to have effective arrangements for raising the alarm and carrying out rescue operations in an emergency.

Refer to pages 29-30 of the Code for more information.

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