

Toolbox Talks 2

009: Assumptions That Can Kill You: Confined Entry

Discussion leader duties for this session:

Think about some confined entry work on previous jobs and what problems could have happened. Be prepared to use these as examples.

What this Safety Talk covers:

Assumptions that people make when doing confined entry work. This differs from a safety talk on confined entry procedures. Instead, it focuses on a general attitude of verifying everything rather than assuming “someone” took care of it.

Discussion notes:

Some confined entry facts to think about

- Conditions change. The oxygen reading that was fine earlier may not apply now. If the permit has time restrictions, follow them closely.
- Permission may be limited. If a confined entry permit allows you to safely work in one part of a space, that doesn’t mean all parts are safe.
- Permits tend to be lean. There is almost never any “fluff” on a permit. Everything on a permit is there for a reason. Don’t second-guess the permit. Glossing over even one item may prove fatal.

Cautions

- Assess any situation that involves entering a confined space. Always do a mental walkthrough of the work procedures and review the confined entry permit. Always confirm that each requirement has been met.
- If you don’t understand, ask. If in doubt, stay out.
- It takes only one oversight or mistake to result in tragedy. You probably will not get a second chance to correct procedural deficiencies or meet unmet requirements.

Assumptions

The following assumptions can kill you:

- The person who handled the confined entry permit thought of everything and overlooked nothing.
- If the previous crew worked safely on the same permit, it’s good enough for me.
- A particular requirement on the permit “isn’t really necessary.”
- The attendant understands everything on the permit.
- I’m not going to be in there very long, so it’s OK to gloss over the permit.
- I really don’t need an attendant.
- Nobody’s passed out yet, so I can get away with (pick your violation).
- I’m tougher than the average guy.

Review and discussion

1. Suppose the job is almost done, and things are on a tight schedule. You’re getting ready to enter the vessel. Walking through the whole permit again could take half an hour. There have been no problems during the three days of work in that confined space. Would it be OK just this one time to go right to work? What are some reasons, either way?
2. There are three of you in the vessel. The attendant hollers through an opening that he has to leave for just a minute but will be right back. What should you do?

- Participant's Signature and Date***

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