

Toolbox Talks 2

070: Unsafe Conditions: Confined Entry

Discussion leader duties for this session:

Review your confined entry procedures.

What this Safety Talk covers:

This Safety Talk addresses unsafe conditions that can endanger you while working in a confined entry space.

Discussion notes:

Background

A confined space may be a “non-permit” space, meaning it doesn’t have the potential to contain any hazard capable of causing death or serious harm. Always assume a confined space is permit-required, until you can positively confirm otherwise. Some unsafe conditions will be “stop work” problems. Notify your supervisor of any problems that stop work.

Unsafe conditions in confined entry

- The confined space contains dangerous gases, but there’s no entry permit. Notify your supervisor. Don’t enter that space until an official determination can be made.
- The permit has yesterday’s date on it. This is an expired permit. It doesn’t reflect current conditions. Notify your supervisor. Don’t enter that space until a valid permit is signed by the entry supervisor.
- There is no record of a recent gas check. A confined entry permit can be issued only when pre-entry conditions are met. Notify the entry supervisor and don’t enter until you get approval to proceed.
- The permit mentions specific areas within the confined space, but doesn’t mention the specific area in which you’ll be working. If there is any inconsistency in the permit, notify the entry supervisor. Don’t enter until the entry supervisor has resolved the problem and updated the permit.
- The permit lists a prohibited condition, but that condition exists at the time you wish to enter. Notify the entry supervisor. Don’t enter until the problem is resolved.
- A condition required by the permit is not met. Notify the entry supervisor. Don’t enter until the problem is resolved.
- The confined space is wide enough for only one person, but there’s no extraction equipment. Notify the entry supervisor. Don’t enter until the extraction equipment is provided and an attendant qualified in its use is present.
- The attendant is inattentive or absent. Exit the confined space, and notify the entry supervisor.
- The space contains combustible gas, but there’s no fire attendant. Notify the entry supervisor. Don’t enter until the entry supervisor has resolved the problem.

Review and discussion

1. What’s the difference between a “non-permit” and “permit required” confined space?
2. If you don’t know whether a confined space is “non-permit” or “permit required,” which one should you assume before getting an official determination?

3. If an unsafe condition creates a “stop work” problem,” is there a specific person you must notify? Who is that, and why is it important to notify that person? *[Note to Presenter: This might be a good time to point out that safety and profitability are not at odds with each other. In fact, good safety practices improve profits. Your supervisor needs to know when you are having safety problems, partly so your supervisor can help resolve those to keep you safe. But another reason is the company needs to have its employees earning the money they're being paid. The faster your supervisor can either resolve the problem or reassign you, the better off everyone is.]*

4. You start to enter a vessel and smell oil fumes. You quickly back out, and look around for a confined entry permit. There isn't one. Does this mean it's safe to enter that vessel, after all? What should you do?

5. The last job site you worked on had a posted gas check schedule. On this job, operators check every couple of hours or so, but there's no schedule posted. Is this a problem? *[Note to Presenter: This example doesn't provide enough information to say one way or the other. But it does raise the question of comparing apples to oranges. The conditions on the two sites might be quite different, as might be the confined entry programs. It's fine to ask about the gas checks, but don't make an issue over differences in procedure. If you're concerned that gas checks aren't being done properly, talk with the entry supervisor. If the answer isn't satisfactory, contact your supervisor.]*

6. The permit is for a multi-chamber underground structure that contains several transformer vaults. All of the vaults are listed on the permit, except one. And you have work to do in that one vault. What should you do?

7. The permit requires forced ventilation. You notice the fans are facing the chair used by the attendant. Should you turn the fans around? *[Note to Presenter: No. You should contact the entry supervisor immediately. The space will have to be re-evaluated, and a new permit should be issued.]*

8. What should you do if the confined space is very narrow and no extraction equipment is present?

9. What should you do if the attendant is inattentive or absent?

10. What should you do if combustible gas is present and there's no fire attendant? *[Note to Presenter: A fire attendant might not be required. Raise the issue and find out how much of a fire hazard exists and what protective measures are being taken.]*

Participant's Signature and Date

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.