

How to Comply with Confined Spaces Safety Training Requirements



Work in confined spaces is extremely hazardous. Dozens of workers are killed or seriously injured in confined spaces each year. Almost all of these injuries could have been prevented if the victim had received proper safety training. So it's no wonder that confined spaces safety training is a specific requirement of occupational health and safety laws. Here's an overview of training requirements.

Who Must Receive Training

You must provide confined spaces safety training to any worker who:

- Enters and works within a confined space;
- Is responsible for carrying out emergency response or rescue operations within a confined space;
- Oversees or serves as an attending worker for a confined space entry; and
- Otherwise works near a confined space.

Training must be provided not just to employees on your payroll but to any worker who enters confined spaces at your workplace, including the workers of a contractor or subcontractor. You don't have to be the one to deliver that training. But it's important to address how confined spaces safety training will be provided to the contractor's workers and how training will be verified in the terms of your contract.

When Confined Spaces Safety Training Is Required

Workers must receive confined spaces safety training before they can enter a confined space. Safety training for confined space work, in other words, can't be a learn-as-you-go experience. Training should be provided at the time of the initial hire if the job duties involve confined space entry and when workers who don't work in confined spaces are assigned to jobs that do involve confined space entry.

Retraining should also be provided:

- Any time there's a change in entry, exit or work procedures within the space;
- Any time new equipment is to be used in the space;
- Any time there's a significant change of conditions inside the space; and
- After incidents or injuries occur inside the space.

It's recommended that all workers receive regular refresher training on confined space entry no less than once a year. While not required by law, the seriousness of the hazards in working in and around confined spaces mean that everyone involved in the program should be well trained. It is especially important to provide annual training to workers who never actually participate in an entry during the year. It's easy for workers to forget the process if they don't have an opportunity to practice what they learned.

Levels of Confined Spaces Safety Training

There are several different levels of confined spaces safety training:

Awareness Level: Workers have general knowledge and understanding of what confined spaces, non-permit confined spaces and permit-required confined spaces are, as well as the hazards associated with each them. Awareness training should take about 1 to 2 hours to complete. Upon completion of awareness training, workers should be able to demonstrate their knowledge, but are not trained to perform any further actions.

Awareness level training is suitable for workers not expected to enter permit spaces but still need to understand the hazards because they work near those spaces and with co-workers who do enter them.

Confined Space Entry Level: This level of training is designed for workers whose job duties require them participate in a permit space entry, either as an Authorized Entrant, Attendant or Entry Supervisor. Training should address all of the specific hazards in the space and the methods used to control them and include a simulated entry.

Confined Space Entry and Rescue Level: This level of training is designed for workers whose job duties include entering permit spaces to perform rescue operations. Such workers must be not only proficient in entering the space as an Authorized Entrant but in carrying out their rescue duties. This might include knowledge of first aid and CPR. Best practice would dictate that they also be trained as an entry participant so that their knowledge of the entry conditions and their associated hazards is comprehensive enough to be able to effect a successful rescue.

Role-Specific Confined Spaces Safety Training

There are different training requirements for different participants in confined space entry, depending on their role in the entry:

Entry Supervisor, i.e., the person in charge of safety for the entry, must know the hazards faced during entry, including information on the mode, signs or symptoms, and consequences of exposure and have the knowledge and skills

necessary to carry out his duties proficiently. Such duties include:

- Verifying that the appropriate information is listed on the entry permit, that all tests specified by the permit have been conducted and that all procedures and equipment specified by the permit are in place before endorsing the permit and allowing entry to begin;
- Terminating the entry and cancelling the permit when necessary to ensure safety;
- Verifying that rescue services are available and that the means for summoning them are operable;
- Removing unauthorized individuals who enter or who attempt to enter the permit space during entry operations; and

Determining, whenever responsibility for a permit space entry operation is transferred and at intervals dictated by the hazards and operations performed within the space that entry operations remain consistent with terms of the entry permit and that acceptable entry conditions are maintained.

Authorized Attendants, i.e., the individuals who remain outside the space and keep track of things while remaining ready to provide or summon help at a moment's notice, must know the hazards faced during entry, including the mode, signs or symptoms and consequences of exposure. They must also be aware of possible behavioral effects of hazard exposure in authorized entrants and be proficient to carry out their specific duties, including:

- Continuously maintaining an accurate count of authorized entrants in the permit space;
- Remaining outside the permit space during entry operations until relieved by another attendant;
- Communicating with authorized entrants as necessary to monitor entrant status and to alert entrants of the need to evacuate the space;
- Monitoring activities inside and outside the space to determine if its safe for entrants to remain in the space and ordering the authorized entrants to evacuate the permit space immediately if he or she:
- Detects a prohibited condition;
- Detects the behavioral effects of hazard exposure in an authorized entrant;
- Detects a situation outside the space that could endanger the authorized entrants; or
- Cannot effectively and safely perform all the duties required.
- Summoning rescue and other emergency services if necessary; and
- Performing no duties that might interfere with their primary duty to monitor and protect the authorized entrants.

Authorized Entrants, i.e., workers allowed to enter the permit space, must know the hazards faced during entry, including information on the mode, signs or symptoms and consequences of the exposure and be proficient in carrying out their duties for the entry, including:

- Properly using equipment as required;
- Communicating with the Attendant;
- Alerting the Attendant whenever he/she:
- Recognizes any warning sign or symptom of exposure to a dangerous situation; or
- Detects a prohibited condition; and

- Exiting from the permit space as quickly as possible whenever:
- An order to evacuate is given by the Attendant or Entry Supervisor;
- He/she recognizes any warning sign or symptom of exposure to a dangerous situation;
- He/she detects a prohibited condition; or
- An evacuation alarm is activated.

Conclusion

An employer must also verify that any training provided to workers renders them proficient to perform their assigned tasks. Proficiency can be verified in different ways including via tests and quizzes, group exercises and drills. All training performed must also be certified by the employer in writing. The certification must state that training was provided and list each worker's name, the signatures or initials of the trainers and the dates of training.