Picture This: Confined Space Whack-a-Mole

This image depicts the kind of confined space work that goes on every day. It also shows something else that happens every day – lack of protective controls while working in a confined space. Take a minute and see how many violations and other safety missteps you can find in this picture.



How many issues did you find? Here's a list of some of them:

1. The area doesn't appear to be barricaded – at least not what we can tell from the picture.
2. No entry attendants or entry supervisor are present.
3. No visible sign of an entry permit.
4. Atmospheric monitoring instruments are nowhere to be seen.
5. Ventilation system is not set up/being used.
6. There's no retrieval system in place (i.e. tripod and winch) for rescue.

Whether you are a confined space entry supervisor, attendant, or entrant, take time to review the entry procedures and permit for each space before anyone enters the space. If there’s not a procedure and permit in place and the space is permit-required – do not begin work until safety procedures have been followed.

Entry procedures include having:

1. A plan for initial entry.
2. Assigned attendants – whose only job is to watch the space.
3. An effective means of communication set up between entrants and attendants/entry supervisors.
4. Specified work procedures within the confined space.
5. Rescue procedures in place.

Final Word

Permit-required confined space entry procedures must be part of your employers confined space entry program. Following these procedures will save your life and the lives of bystanders who may attempt rescue (unprepared and unprotected).