

# Confined Spaces

Employees may have to fit into small, confined areas to carry out specific tasks. OSHA has separated confined spaces into two primary categories: confined spaces and permit-required confined spaces, due to the inherent hazards associated with these spaces. OSHA developed a standard that addressed the requirements for classification, safe entry, and rescue in order to shield workers from the risks connected with permit-required confined spaces.

## What are Confined Spaces?

Confined spaces are spaces that:

- are large enough and so configured that an employee can bodily enter to perform assigned work
- are not designed for continuous occupancy by the employee
- have limited or restricted means of entry or exit

## How are Permit-Required Confined Spaces Different?

A permit-required confined space meets the criteria for a confined space **AND** contains one or more of the following:

- Potential to contain an explosive, toxic, or hazardous atmosphere.
- Material with the potential to engulf someone who enters the space like water, sludge, or pellets.
- Internal configuration that might cause an entrant to be trapped or asphyxiated by inwardly converging walls or by a floor that slopes downward and tapers to a smaller cross section.
- Any other recognized serious safety or health hazards (e.g., exposed electrical components, unguarded machinery, thermal hazards, fall hazards, etc.).

**NOTE:** Introducing additional hazards may transform a confined space into a permit-required confined space.

## Common Types of Confined Spaces

The following are examples of potential confined space entry locations:

- Acid neutralization tanks
- Sewer pits
- Condensate pits
- Elevator pits
- Boilers
- Water tanks
- Fuel tanks
- Hazardous exhaust plenums
- Compactors
- Electrical Vaults

## Important to Remember

- Permit-required confined spaces contain serious health and safety hazards and require specialized training and equipment for safe entry.
- NEVER enter a permit-required confined space unless you are authorized to do so by EHS.
- All permit-required confined spaces must be secured and have signage to identify them.
- If you identify a space that may meet the definition of a permit-required confined space that has no visible signage, DO NOT ENTER the space and contact EHS immediately.



## References

- OSHA: [Permit-Required Confined Spaces](#)
- OSHA: [Confined Spaces General Industry Standard](#)