

## Practices and Procedures to Protect Employees

The permit-required confined spaces regulations establish minimum requirements for the practices and procedures to protect employees from the hazards associated with entry into permit-required confined spaces (PRCS). These rules do not apply to agriculture, construction, and shipyard employment.

A confined space is defined by the following criteria:

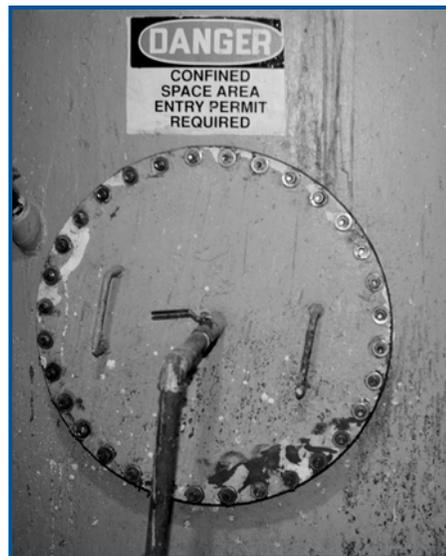
- It is large enough and so configured that an employee can bodily enter and perform assigned work.
- It has limited or restricted means for entry or exit (e.g., tanks, vessels, silos, storage bins, hoppers, vaults, pits, etc.).
- It is not designed for continuous human occupancy.

A PRCS has one or more of the following characteristics:

- It contains or has a potential to contain a hazardous atmosphere.
- It contains a material that has the potential for engulfing the entrant (e.g., liquids, grain, sand, coal, etc.).
- It has an internal configuration such that an entrant could be trapped or asphyxiated by inwardly converging walls or a floor that slopes downward and tapers to a smaller cross-section.
- It contains any other recognized serious safety or health hazard.

The applicable regulation is Title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Section 1910.146. The regulation requires the employer to:

- Evaluate the workplace to determine if it contains any PRCS.
- If PRCSs are found, the employer must inform employees of the existence, location, and danger posed by these spaces by placing “Danger—Confined Space” stickers at these locations.
- If employees are not to enter PRCSs, the employer must take steps to prevent entry (e.g., postings, locks, etc.).
- If employees will enter PRCSs, the employer must develop and implement a written permit space entry program that complies with the standard. Persons acting as entrants, attendants, and entry supervisors must be trained according to the standard.



## Permit-Required Confined Spaces

Employers have four options to enter a permit-required confined space:

- **Option 1:**

**Use a permit entry program** (for safety and health hazards)

If atmospheric, engulfment, and/or mechanical hazards in the PRCS cannot be eliminated and/or controlled prior to entry, a complete permit entry program must be followed. Please refer to 29 CFR 1910.146 (d) for a complete description of a permit entry program.

- **Option 2:**

**Use alternate entry procedures** (for health hazards)

If the only hazard in the space is an actual or potential atmospheric hazard that can be controlled through continuous forced air ventilation, the alternate entry procedures can be used. Please refer to 29 CFR 1910.146 (c)(5).

- **Option 3:**

**Reclassify as a nonpermit-required confined space** (for safety hazards)

A PRCS can be reclassified as a nonpermit confined space. In order to reclassify a PRCS, the employer must:

- Eliminate all actual or potential atmospheric hazards.
- Eliminate or control space hazards.
- Document the reclassification per the written PRCS program.
- Make the recertification documentation available to all employees who will enter the space.

The permit space may be reclassified as a nonpermit confined space for as long as the hazards remain eliminated. Please refer to 29 CFR 1910.146 (c)(7).

- **Option 4:**

**Hire a contractor to conduct the work needed inside the permit-required confined space(s)**

The employer (host employer) must inform the contractor of the hazards of the PRCS where work is to take place. A permit for entry or reclassification must be conducted either via the employer's or the contractor's written PRCS program. Please refer to 29 CFR 1910.146 (c)(8)–(c)(9).

If you or employees are unable to enter a permit-required confined space by following one of those four options: Do not allow employees to enter a permit-required confined space.

For more information, please refer to 29 CFR 1910.146 which can be found at [www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/index.html](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/index.html).

## Free Technical Assistance

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For assistance with occupational safety and health questions or to request free, professional on-site consultation services, contact a safety or health consultant with the Indiana Department of Labor's INSafe division by e-mailing [insafe@dol.IN.gov](mailto:insafe@dol.IN.gov) or by calling (317) 232-2688. Visit INSafe's website at [www.IN.gov/dol/insafe.htm](http://www.IN.gov/dol/insafe.htm) for more information.

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