

STOP & THINK

Week 16 – Confined Spaces



“A confined space can be any enclosed area that, if unventilated, could contain a toxic gas or vapour or insufficient oxygen to support life. In many cases, the dangers cannot be detected by the senses. It is also important to remember that many deaths occur to persons attempting a rescue from a confined space”. We come across lots of existing confined spaces on our sites or we’re about to introduce new ones through our designs. Confined Spaces are likely to be there or introduced and it’s important for you to be aware of the consequences.

B&V’s procedure [GA460A - Safety in Confined Spaces](#) provides guidance on the identification of confined spaces and describes the procedures that should be followed by B&V employees and others working under B&V control who need to enter or work in confined spaces. The procedure is designed to take account of the requirements of the [Confined Spaces Regulations 1997](#) and the recommendations of the [Approved Code of Practice \(ACOP\) for the Regulations \(HSE reference L101\)](#).

Taking the key points from Slide 3 of B&V’s ‘Introduction to Confined Spaces’ presentation (see below) – **WHY DO PEOPLE DIE:**

- They fail to recognise a confined space
- They underestimate the dangers
- They trust their senses
- They do not stay vigilant
- They attempt to rescue others
- They take chances

A ‘confined space’ has two defining features:

- It is a place which is substantially (though not always entirely) **enclosed**, and
- There will be a reasonably foreseeable risk of serious injury from **hazardous substances or conditions** within the space or nearby

The term ‘**specified risk**’ is further defined to mean:

“a risk of —

a) *serious injury to any person at work arising from a fire or explosion;*

b) *without prejudice to paragraph (a) —*

i. *the loss of consciousness of any person at work arising from an increase in body temperature;*

ii. *the loss of consciousness or asphyxiation of any person at work arising from gas, fume, vapour or the lack of oxygen;*

c) *the drowning of any person at work arising from an increase in the level of a liquid; or*

d) *the asphyxiation of any person at work arising from a free-flowing solid or the inability to reach a respirable environment due to entrapment by a free-flowing solid.”*

Thus a 'confined space' is an enclosed or partially-enclosed workplace in which there is a risk of personnel being exposed to dangerous gases, a lack of oxygen or some other hazard. Difficulties of access into or escape from the workplace are also important factors in assessing whether it is a confined space

Immediate task will always be 'Do I need to enter at all?' Can we:

- Design out
- Test from outside?
- Use long handle tools?
- Use CCTV?
- etc

There's a significant volume of information / resources relating to confined space so I do not intend to repeat it here. However, I wish you to stop and think, and ask yourself 'have I designed in a new confined space or asking someone to enter or work in a confined space, and do we really need to?'. The classic example is the common valve chamber. Do we really need a chamber or can we not bring the pipework out of the ground and have the slabs located on a slab?

As you're aware, when undertaking design work a good starting point is ERICPD:

Eliminate **R**educe **I**solate **C**ontrol **P**PE **D**iscipline

For further information:

B&V iNet (PROSYS)

Procedure B336 Manual Handling

Safety Alert:: <http://bvinet/C4/C19/Safety%20Alerts/Document%20Library/Safety%20Alert%20-%20Confined%20Space%20Madness.pdf>

Site Tool Box Talk: <http://prosys/uploadeddocuments/GA431B.htm>

One Safety Hub

<http://www.onesafetyhub.co.uk/Partners/BandV/Lists/OSHLibrary/Forms/DispForm.aspx?ID=42>

Interestingly there is very limited information / Alerts / Best practice to be found on the One Safety Hub. To a certain extent this substantiates one of my fears in that the industry may not be as currently focused on Confined Spaces as it was previously.

HSE

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/confinedspace/index.htm>

A question or two to get you thinking!

Have you introduced an unnecessary confined space on your project ?

Are you asking one of your colleagues to enter a confined space unnecessarily ?