

## CONFINED SPACES

**Ignorance to the dangers of confined spaces has led to the deaths of a number of construction workers. In many cases, attempted rescue has ended in tragedy with the death of the poorly equipped rescuer as well.**

- A confined space can be described as a place with poor ventilation or limited access. Obvious examples include manholes, tanks, ducts, underground chambers, deep excavations etc. There are many other less obvious examples where access may normally be OK but the risks created by the work activity result in the area becoming a confined space.
- The main hazards in confined spaces are:-
  - Lack of oxygen - Suffocation
  - Toxic atmosphere - presence of certain gases or fumes
  - Flammable atmospheres - danger of fire or explosion
- The best way to avoid becoming a victim in a confined space is not to enter the space in the first place.
- For some tasks, there is no alternative than to enter and work in the confined space, in which case, we need to plan carefully our method of work.
  - method statement including emergency arrangements
  - detailed working procedures - all employees required to enter **must** be trained and competent to carry out the work safely.
  - permit to work system confirming a safe condition exists to start.
- Tests to ensure a safe atmosphere with approved monitoring devices have to be carried out **before** and **during entry**.
- Having entered the confined space should any issues arise with any part of the planned method of work, or equipment such as a failure in a system to provide ventilation to supply fresh air evacuate the confined space immediately and seek instruction before recommencing work.
- Personnel and equipment detailed in the emergency arrangements, including trained personnel, established rescue procedures with appropriate rescue equipment, needs to be in place at all times during the works.

### Questions:

- 1 What are the main hazards to you in a confined space?
- 2 How do you establish that a confined space is safe to enter?
- 3 What examples of a confined space could you find on a construction site?

### Remember:

**Don't enter a confined space until the risks have been assessed.  
Rescues should never be attempted  
Without the use of proper rescue equipment**

Further Information:- CIP Manual, Section 23