Confined space toolbox talk

29 CFR 1926.1203, 1926.1204, 1926.1205, 1926.1209, 1926.1207, 1910.146

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

If a coworker stopped answering at the bottom of a manhole right now, what would you do first?

Why it matters

Confined spaces can look harmless from the outside. The air inside can be short on oxygen or hold toxic or flammable gas you may not see or smell, and loose material like sand or grain can bury a worker. When someone goes down, the natural reaction is to rush in and help, and that can turn one victim into two.

Key points

1. **Know a confined space when you see one**
   Tanks, vaults, pits, manholes, silos and crawl spaces have a few things in common. You can get inside, the ways in and out are limited, and they are not built for people to stay in. On a construction site, a competent person must identify every confined space the crew may work in before work starts, and flag which ones are permit spaces.
   29 CFR 1926.1203(a)

2. **A danger sign means stay out**
   Permit spaces have serious hazards, and exposed workers must be told where they are and what the danger is, by danger signs or another equally effective way. If you are not authorized to enter, you stay out, even to grab a tool or take a quick look. Keep covers and barriers in place so nobody walks in by mistake.
   29 CFR 1926.1203(b)(1)

3. **Test the air before anyone goes in**
   Your nose and eyes cannot tell you if the air is safe, so test it before anyone goes in. When testing the air, test for oxygen first, then combustible gases and vapors, then toxic gases and vapors. Ask to see the readings, and if the monitor alarms, get out.
   29 CFR 1926.1204(e)(3)

4. **Read the permit before you go in**
   Entry into a permit space is planned on paper first. Before entry begins, the entry supervisor named on the permit must sign it to authorize entry. The permit should show the hazards, the controls, the test results, who is inside and how to call rescue. If what you see does not match the permit, stop.
   29 CFR 1926.1205(b)

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5 The attendant stays outside

The attendant is posted outside the space and keeps an accurate count of who is inside. They stay in contact with the entrants, order everyone out when conditions turn dangerous, and call rescue as soon as entrants may need help. They stay outside until relieved by another attendant.

29 CFR 1926.1209

6 Never go in after a downed worker

If an entrant collapses, every instinct says go in after them. Without the right training, air supply and equipment, you can become the next victim. In construction, confined space training must teach workers who are not authorized to do entry rescues about the dangers of trying one. Call for rescue, use the retrieval line from outside if one is rigged, and keep everyone else out.

29 CFR 1926.1207(a)

Scenario

Picture this: your crew is replacing a pump in a vault that has been closed up for weeks. The lid is off, the air smells fine, and a worker climbs down to grab a dropped wrench before anyone tests the air. Moments later, the worker stops answering. Their partner starts down the ladder to help. What should have happened before anyone climbed down, and what should the partner do right now?

Crew discussion

1. Which spaces on this job could be confined spaces, and which ones are marked as permit spaces?
2. Who on this crew is trained as an entrant, an attendant or an entry supervisor?
3. How do we call rescue from this site, and who answers?
4. What would make you stop work and get everyone out of a space?

Bottom line

Test the air, get the entry authorized, keep someone watching from outside, and never go in after a downed worker without a rescue plan.

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Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema Confined spaces / Espacios confinados

Date / Fecha _____

Trainer / Instructor _____

Location / Lugar _____

Company / Empresa _____

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