

## CONFINED SPACES: PERMIT-REQUIRED BEST PRACTICES

Entering permit-required confined spaces is one of the most hazardous job tasks for public employees. It is extremely important to review your employer's permit-required confined space entry program to ensure regulatory compliance and to make sure employees are following all safety rules and procedures.

A **Confined Space** is defined as a space that is large enough and so configured that an employee can bodily enter and perform assigned work, has limited or restricted means for entry or exit, and is not designed for continuous employee occupancy.

A **Permit-Required Confined Space** contains or has a potential to contain a hazardous atmosphere; contains a material that has the potential for engulfing an entrant; has an internal configuration such that an entrant could be trapped or asphyxiated by inwardly converging walls or by a floor which slopes downward and tapers to a smaller cross-section, or contains any other recognized serious safety or health hazard.

### Written Program

Employers are required to maintain a written permit-required confined space program. The program should include a list of authorized entrants and attendants, the name(s) of entry supervisor(s), training information, rescue procedures, and a list of known permit-required confined spaces that employees may enter. The program should also detail allowable entry conditions and procedures for safe entry into permit-required confined spaces. The MSI offers a model template [Confined Space Written Program](#) that can be tailored to your needs.

### Confined Space Entry Permit

Before entry is authorized, the employer shall document the completion of measures required by the confined space standard by preparing an entry permit. Before entry begins, the entry supervisor identified on the permit shall sign the entry permit to authorize entry. The completed permit shall be made available at the time of entry to all authorized entrants by posting it at the entry of the space or by any other equally effective means so that the entrants can confirm that pre-entry preparations have been completed. The duration of the permit may not exceed the time required to complete the assigned task or job identified on the permit. The MSI offers a template [Confined Space Entry Permit](#) that can be tailored to your needs.

### Training

Training must be provided so that all employees involved in permit-required confined space entry acquire the understanding, knowledge, and skills necessary for the safe performance of their duties. NJCE LIVE offers a three-hour virtual [Confined Space Entry](#) class. Practical hands-on training is offered by request to be completed by your Risk Control Consultant or can be done in-house. If doing the demonstration in-house, please review the [Video Briefing - Confined Space Hands-on Demonstration](#). Additionally, rescue teams must perform a practice/training rescue at least once every twelve months.

### Equipment

Confined space entry equipment includes but is not limited to a gas detection meter, ventilation blower, non-entry rescue tripod, harness, hard hat, and other required personal protective equipment. All equipment should be maintained per the manufacturer's recommendations including regular inspections of equipment, calibration, and zeroing of meters. Refer to equipment owner's manuals for information on criteria and frequency of inspections.

## Rescue Operations

There are various forms of rescue operations including self-rescue, non-entry rescue, using an in-house rescue team, or using an outside rescue team. An outside rescue team may be a contracted rescue team or a local fire department or a county tactical rescue team. When selecting an outside rescue team, you must ensure they are equipped and trained to perform permit-required confined space rescue operations. Many local fire departments are not equipped or trained for these types of rescues.

## Alternate Entry

Alternate Entry procedures can be performed under certain circumstances without the use of a permit if:

1. The only hazard is air quality.
2. Forced air ventilation will control the hazard.
3. There are data and historical records to support this.

Then:

1. Hazards shall be removed before opening.
2. Air is tested & found to be acceptable.
3. Forced ventilation is continued during entry.
4. If the condition develops, entrants must exit.

MSI offers a model [Confined Space Alternate Entry Permit](#) that can be tailored to your needs.