

New Construction Sites And Confined Space Rescue Teams

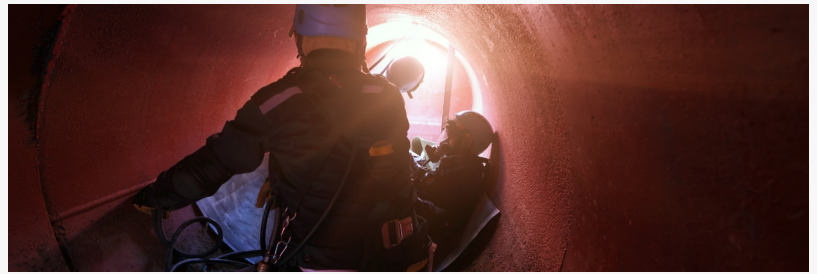
This article will discuss the dangers of confined spaces for new construction, developing preventative measures, and how to plan for the proper response.

LOS ALAMITOS, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES, March 27, 2023

/EINPresswire.com/ -- About 5,250

American workers die on the job every

year, according to the [U.S. Department of Labor](#). That's 14 deaths a day.



DCS Confined Space Rescue Team

These tragedies sometimes occur in new construction and renovations and in areas where danger is least suspected. Work in tight spaces is especially dangerous. That's why OSHA — the Occupational Safety and Health Administration — requires a confined space rescue team and rescue plan in place for new construction.

These teams are critical because you don't know that when a dangerous situation will happen on the job site, it can seem to come out of nowhere with no warning.

Preparation is tantamount.

In the following article, we will discuss the dangers of confined spaces for new construction, developing preventative measures, and how to plan for the proper response.

Why Do You Need a Confined Space Rescue Team?

In 2015, OSHA updated its rules for confined spaces of construction. If working in crawl spaces, tanks, utility holes, tunnels, and trenches, then there's a good chance that workers will encounter a host of dangerous situations.

What do these confined spaces all have in common?

They are not designed for occupancy for a long period of time, they are large enough for a worker to squeeze into, and they have few entry points and exits.

The official rule is a little denser. It reads: "An 'enclosed space' is a term... describing a workplace such as a manhole or a vault that is designed for periodic use under normal operating conditions, and that, under normal circumstances, does not contain a hazardous atmosphere but may contain a hazardous atmosphere under abnormal conditions."

These confined spaces occur on thousands of job sites all across the country every day. And if one is wondering if a rescue team is needed on the job site, then the answer is probably, yes.

Sewers, storage tanks, reaction vessels, enclosed drains, tunnels, and silos are all other examples of possible workspaces that fall under the heading of enclosed spaces. Therefore, OSHA requires a confined space rescue plan and possibly a team for its construction.

Some other less-known enclosed spaces that also would need a plan or team include ductwork, furnace composition chambers, vats, chambers with open tops, and sealed unventilated rooms.

What Are The Hazards of Confined Spaces?

One of the greatest hazards of working in confined spaces isn't getting stuck, although that does happen. No, the greatest danger is running into a breathing situation.

A worker can get into trouble here in several ways, and unfortunately, they won't detect them in a lot of cases with their eyes.

You can't see if there is a lack of oxygen. You can't see if there are poisonous fumes or vapors. And you can't see if there's a flammable gas leak in the confined environment.

Low Oxygen Levels

[An environment with low oxygen](#) can occur for several reasons, and a few of them are obvious. Reactions between soil and the air can sometimes eat up the oxygen in a confined space.

In other cases, groundwater can react with limestone or chalk in the rock to make carbon dioxide. The carbon dioxide will then displace the oxygen in the confined space.

Low oxygen can also form in steel tanks if the metal is oxidizing to form rust.

In any event, these situations can lead to asphyxiation. Warning signs of this life-threatening lack of oxygen are low energy, labored or abnormal breathing, headaches, chest pains, and dizziness.

Ultimately, the worker could lose consciousness and die.

In many cases, workers not following a confined space plan will lower themselves into a confined space, discover too late that there's low oxygen and not have the strength to climb out.

Poisonous gases

Noxious and toxic gases build up in sewers and pits or leak into new construction through connective pipes. Poisonous gases can also leak into pits and trenches if in proximity to contaminated areas.

Some examples of these gases are hydrogen sulfide and carbon monoxide.

Hydrogen sulfide, or "sewer gas" as it's commonly known, is an explosive gas that can build up in manholes or leak into tanks from pipes. It can sometimes smell like rotten eggs or sickeningly sweet.

Hydrogen sulfide can cause a host of irritability, dizziness and nausea, collapse, and eventual death.

Carbon monoxide, on the other hand, is odorless. While it can leak into confined spaces from pipes, CO is usually a side-effect of construction. Carbon monoxide is created by burning gasoline, natural gas, propane, or kerosene. Any composition engine can create CO, and exposure is assured if the engine or generator isn't properly vented.

Other Issues

Besides gas and oxygen, other issues that can harm workers in confined spaces are:

- Extreme dust and particulates
- Extreme heat
- Flooding
- Physical mishap and injury

Have a Plan for Confined Spaces

There are a number of steps that can be taken for working in confined spaces and to satisfy federal guidelines. Consider contacting a [safety compliance professional](#) with a proven track record with confined spaces.

To create this rescue plan, a company also needs to develop a risk profile. This will include a map of the site or, in new construction, a building preplan. Hazards, dimensions, controls, and the number of exits will all factor into the risk profile.

With the risk profile created, then calculate a confined space rescue plan that will not only map out all the physical elements needed to conduct a rescue (equipment needed, anchor points, etc.) but also account for how first responders will gain access.

A safety compliance consultant can walk through all the steps of the plan and contingencies for rescue scenarios. Also, the business will likely save money by contracting this professional rather than bringing one on the payroll full-time.

Practice Makes Perfect

Even with the best plan in the world to make a confined space rescue team successful, it isn't worth a rusted lag bolt if it is not practiced.

So, what can be done? Conduct drills, enforce wearing safety equipment, know the local first responders, and always have a rescue team ready to go. Companies never know when work in a confined space will need to utilize that rescue team.

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