Confined spaces

Entry and hot work permits >

This information bulletin has been developed to assist owners, employers, managers, supervisors, workers and contractors in identifying the appropriate training required when working in or upon confined spaces. This bulletin should be read in conjunction with the other information bulletins in this series.

Legislation

Australian Standard AS 2865, Safe working in a confined space, requires that the employer is to provide written approval, in the form of an entry permit before work is carried out in a confined space. This is reinforced in regulation 61A of the Workplace Health and Safety Regulations.

Introduction

Occasionally safe working may be achieved by automatic safeguards but more often reliance has to be placed upon the actions of people. Verbal instructions or requests are liable to be misheard, misinterpreted or forgotten and are not a satisfactory basis for action on which lives may depend. The dangers and risks associated with entering and working in a confined space cannot be underestimated. The consequences for not taking the appropriate action can often result in injury or even death.

The most effective administrative control is the written permit system, which requires formal action by those responsible for the work. The written permit system associated with safe working in confined spaces is usually comprised of two permits (1) Entry permit and (2) Hot work permit.

Entry permits

Entry permits are records which certify that specific precautions and procedures have been established before any person enters a confined space. The permit process provides a systematic method of verifying that all necessary checks have been carried out before the entry is authorised.

The entry permit should state its validity and should be revalidated whenever it becomes evident that the duration of work will involve one of the following:

- a change in the person responsible for the direct control of the work in a confined space;
- a significant break in work continuity;
- a significant change in atmosphere or work to be performed.

Entry permits are to be displayed in a prominent location to facilitate signing and clearance.

Hot work permits

Hot work is a term used to describe heat-producing operations such as welding, flame cutting and grinding. Hot work presents two significant hazards; (1) open flames or flying sparks that can ignite flammable gases and vapours and (2) hot work that may produce toxic fumes and gases. The fact that hot work is going to be performed in a confined space must be noted either on the entry permit or on a hot work permit attached to the entry permit (whichever is applicable).

Developing permits

It is the organisation's responsibility to develop entry and hot work permits. An effective permit is one that addresses the needs of the organisation. While both permits have certain information in common, their form and appearance may vary widely as a result of:

- corporate philosophy and organisational structure;
- the nature of the entry, including the characteristics of spaces and types of tasks to be performed;
- the experience level of people who complete them.

Normally entry or hot work permits are developed with the organisation's logo or letterhead to denote its ownership.

When developing entry or hot work permits the organisation should refer to the relevant standard to ensure that the appropriate amount of information is included in the permits. Relevant standards for developing permits are:

Entry permits	AS 2865	– Safe working in a confined space
Hot work permits	AS 1674.1	– Safety in welding and allied processes – Fire
	AS 1674.2	– Safety in welding and allied processes – Electrical

Australian Standards are available from the Territory Construction Association, phone 8922 9666. Australian Standards can be viewed online by visiting the Northern Territory Library, Parliament House, phone 8999 7177.

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