

SAFETY COMPENDIUM – CONFINED SPACES

Confined spaces are divided into two categories: (1) permit required, and (2) non-permit required. Safety personnel determine the appropriate category.

A confined space is a space that:

1. Is large enough and so configured that an employee can bodily enter and perform assigned work; and
2. Has limited or restricted means for entry and exit (for example, manholes, sewers, pits, sumps, vaults, tunnels, boilers, tanks, vessels, vaults, and pits are spaces that may have limited means of entry); and
3. Is not designed for continuous human occupancy.

The installation head must comply with the following responsibilities regarding confined spaces:

1. Maintain the facility inventory and evaluation of confined spaces, for both postal-owned and -leased property owned or leased properties.
2. Inform employees who work near (may have access to) a permit space of the existence and location of the permit space, the danger it poses, and the prohibition against entry.
3. Inform employees who enter non-permit spaces of types of potential hazards in confined spaces and instructed not to perform tasks that may create an atmospheric or other hazard.

A **permit-required confined space** contains (or has the potential to contain) a hazard capable of causing death or serious injury.

- The space must be identified by a sign that says, "Danger, Permit-Required Confined Space - Do Not Enter."
- Work in this space must be performed only by competent and qualified contractors.
- *Postal Service employees are not permitted to enter a permit-required confined space.*

A **non-permit-required confined space** does not contain (or lacks the potential to contain) a hazard capable of causing death or serious physical harm.

- An employee who enters a non-permit-required confined space, must be aware of potential hazards.
- The employee must notify the supervisor when (1) required to enter a non-permit-required confined space, and (2) when the work in the space is completed.
- An employee or contractor may never perform a task that may create an atmospheric or other hazard in a confined space. Some examples follow:
 - Welding, cutting, soldering, or other hot work.
 - Cleaning with organic solvents, corrosives, or other hazardous materials.
 - Painting or applying other surface coatings.
 - Using hazardous or dust-creating powered equipment (other than small hand tools).

Sources: OSHA 29 CFR 1910.146, Permit-required confined spaces; EL-803, Maintenance Safety Handbook; MI-810-93-1, Confined Space safety; PS Form 8156, *Confined Space Inventory and Atmospheric Hazards Evaluation*.