

Toolbox Talk: Safe Entry Procedures & Roles in Permit-Required Confined Spaces

Standard: 29 CFR 1910.146 Permit-Required Confined Spaces standard

Purpose

This toolbox talk outlines the required procedures and clearly defined roles necessary for safe entry into permit-required confined spaces (PRCS). Strict adherence to these procedures is essential to prevent serious injury or fatality.

Before Entry: The Permit System

No one may enter a permit-required confined space without a properly completed entry permit. The permit ensures that:

- All hazards have been identified and evaluated
- Necessary controls are in place
- Authorized personnel are assigned
- Rescue procedures are planned and available

The permit must include:

- Location and description of the space
- Identified hazards and control measures
- Acceptable entry conditions
- Names of authorized entrants, attendants, and entry supervisor
- Atmospheric test results
- Duration of the permit

Atmospheric Testing & Hazard Control

Testing must be performed **before and during entry** using calibrated equipment. The required order of testing is:

1. Oxygen levels (must be between 19.5% and 23.5%)
2. Flammable gases and vapors
3. Toxic contaminants

Control measures may include:

- Ventilation (natural or mechanical)
- Lockout/Tagout of energy sources
- Isolation of lines (blanking, blinding, disconnecting)
- Purging or cleaning the space

CONFINED SPACE ENTRY PROCEDURE



Required Roles & Responsibilities

Authorized Entrant

- Enters the confined space to perform work
- Understands hazards and signs/symptoms of exposure
- Maintains communication with the attendant
- Exits immediately if conditions change or an alarm is triggered

Attendant

- Remains outside the space-at all times
- Monitors entrants and maintains constant communication
- Orders evacuation if hazards arise
- Prevents unauthorized entry
- Initiates emergency response if needed

Entry Supervisor

- Verifies that all precautions and tests are completed
- Authorizes entry by signing the permit
- Ensures rescue services are available
- Cancels the permit when work is complete or conditions change

Communication & Monitoring

- Continuous communication must be maintained between entrant and attendant
- Atmospheric conditions must be monitored throughout the job
- Work must stop immediately if unsafe conditions develop

Emergency & Rescue Procedures

- Never attempt a rescue without proper training and equipment

- Non-entry rescue methods (such as retrieval systems) should be used whenever possible
- Emergency services must be readily available and aware of the entry

Key Safety Reminders

- No permit = no entry
- Never work alone in a confined space
- Follow all procedures, shortcuts can be fatal
- Stay alert to changing conditions at all times

Discussion Questions

1. Who is assigned each role for today's confined space work?
2. What hazards are identified on the permit?
3. What is our rescue plan if something goes wrong?

Takeaway Message

Safe confined space entry depends on preparation, clear roles, and strict compliance with procedures. Every worker involved plays a critical role in ensuring that everyone goes home safely.

