



## XXXX: Confined Space (A/P)

Approved 26 06 02

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### Purpose

Work in confined spaces presents significant hazards, including atmospheric and physical risks. The purpose of this program is to establish the Pacific Rim School District's requirements for identifying confined spaces, controlling access, and ensuring that any work conducted within these spaces complies with WorkSafeBC Occupational Health and Safety Regulation Part 9.

Entry into low-risk confined spaces is restricted to authorized and trained personnel only. No employee shall enter, or be required to enter, a confined space designated or reasonably considered to be low risk unless the employee:

- Understands the risks associated with accessing a low-risk confined space.
- Has received education and training with respect to the confined space entry program and safe work procedures.
- Has received education and training in how to conduct a risk assessment prior to entry into a confined space and prior to the starting work of any kind in a confined space.
- Has demonstrated proficiency in the above and that proficiency have been recorded.

This procedure recognizes varying levels of hazard associated with identified work activities/areas. Tasks or areas classified as *moderate hazard* may be accessed and performed, provided all required procedures, controls, and safety measures are strictly followed. Tasks or areas classified as *high hazard* present an unacceptable level of risk and are therefore prohibited unless formally reassessed and explicitly authorized under a separate, approved process.

### Definitions

#### Clean Respirable Air

Within a confined space, clean respirable air is defined as an atmosphere comparable to outdoor air and containing:

- About 20.9% oxygen by volume.
- No measurable flammable gas or vapor.
- No air contaminant in concentrations exceeding either 10% of its applicable exposure limit or an acceptable ambient air quality.



## Confined Space

Any area which:

- Is enclosed or partially enclosed.
- Is not designed or intended for continuous human occupancy.
- Has limited or restricted means for entry or exit which may complicate providing first aid, evacuation, rescue or other emergency response and.
- Is large enough and so configured that an employee could enter to perform assigned work.

## High Hazard Atmosphere or High-Risk

A high-risk confined space is one in which atmospheric conditions may expose an employee to the risk of death, serious injury, acute illness, or incapacitation, or otherwise impair the employee's ability to exit the space without assistance, particularly in the event of ventilation or respiratory equipment failure.

District staff are strictly prohibited from entering high-risk confined spaces.

High-risk confined spaces include those where atmospheric concentrations exceed the following limits, even when continuous ventilation is provided:

|                    |                                                         |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Oxygen             | not less than 19.5% or greater than 23.0% by volume     |
| Combustible Gasses | not greater than 20% of the lower explosive limit (LEL) |
| Hydrogen Sulfide   | not greater than 10 ppm                                 |
| Carbon Monoxide    | not greater than 25 ppm                                 |
| Other Contaminants | exceed the applicable exposure limit                    |

## Moderate Hazard Atmosphere

A moderate-risk confined space is one where the atmosphere is not considered clean respirable air but is unlikely to impair an employee's ability to exit the space without assistance in the event of ventilation or respiratory equipment failure.

Moderate-risk confined spaces include those that have:

- Direct exposure to sewage or potentially hazardous substances.
- Atmospheric concentrations comprised of the following constituents which cannot be maintained within the range outlined for a low hazard atmosphere with continuous ventilation, but cannot be outside the following ranges;

|                    |                                              |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Oxygen             | 19.5 - 23.0% by volume                       |
| Combustible Gasses | up to 10% of the lower explosive limit (LEL) |
| Hydrogen Sulfide   | less than 10 parts per million (ppm)         |
| Carbon Monoxide    | less than 25 ppm                             |



## **Low Hazard Atmosphere**

A low-risk confined space is one in which the atmosphere has been confirmed, through pre-entry testing or other reliable means, to contain clean respirable air immediately prior to entry and is not expected to change during the course of the work.

Low hazard confined spaces include all confined spaces that have;

- Walk-in access from grade or manhole/hatch access.
- Atmospheric conditions which are the same as those of outdoor air.
- No direct exposure to sewage or potentially hazardous substances.

Low hazard atmospheres are atmospheres within a low-risk confined space that are:

- Shown by pre-entry testing to have clean “breathable” air or
- Are otherwise known to contain, clean breathable air immediately prior to entry and
- Where the quality of the breathable air is not likely to change during the work activity.

Activities in a low-level hazard confined space must be limited. Activities conducted in low hazard confined spaces include:

- General inspection.
- Repairs and activities that will not generate air contaminants in excess of 10% of permissible concentrations as established by WorkSafeBC.

## **Responsibilities**

### **District Administration and Supervisors must ensure that:**

- All access points to confined spaces (e.g., hatches, doors, or entryways) must be secured to prevent unauthorized entry.
- “No Entry” signage must be posted at all access points to high-risk confined spaces, and these areas must be secured against entry.
- “Restricted Access” signage must be posted at all access points to moderate and low-risk confined spaces.
- Safe work procedures for entry into moderate and low-risk confined spaces must be in place and readily accessible to authorized personnel.
- Supervisors responsible for confined space work must be adequately trained and competent to oversee both the work and the employees involved.
- Employees assigned to enter or perform work in low-risk confined spaces must receive appropriate training on identified hazards and follow all established safe work procedures.



**Managers of Facilities is responsible for:**

- All confined spaces within the District must be identified and documented.
- The locations of all confined spaces, including crawlspaces, must be recorded and made available to administrators, directors, managers, and supervisors responsible for employee health and safety.
- Representative air sampling must be conducted in accordance with established procedures, and results must be documented and shared with appropriate supervisory and administrative staff.
- Confined space entry procedures must be developed in accordance with Part 9 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation. Only authorized employees may enter confined spaces, and all work must be carried out in compliance with these procedures.

**Employees shall:**

- Employees must not enter any confined space, or any area identified as a confined space, unless they are trained, authorized, and competent to do so.
- All work must be conducted in accordance with established safe work procedures.
- Any hazards, unsafe conditions, or potential risks must be reported to a supervisor immediately.

**Contractor's must:**

- Contractors must notify Operations a minimum of 24 hours prior to any confined space entry.
- Contractors must provide a copy of their confined space entry procedures to Operations prior to commencing work.
- Contractors must be familiar with and comply with the District's confined space procedures while on site.
- Contractors are responsible for ensuring that all employees under their direction comply with Part 9 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation for confined space work.
- Any unsafe conditions must be reported to Operations prior to entry or immediately upon being identified.
- All incidents or accidents occurring in a confined space must be reported to Operations immediately.



## **Low Hazard Confined Space Entry Procedure**

### **Pre-entry Atmospheric Testing:**

Pre-entry atmospheric testing is a systematic method used to confirm atmospheric conditions prior to entering a confined space. In accordance with provincial regulations, testing is not required for low-risk confined spaces where:

- The location and control of the space ensure that a hazardous atmosphere cannot develop; and
- Representative sampling has demonstrated that the atmosphere within the space, or group of similar spaces, meets the definition of a low-risk atmosphere.

### **Representative Air Sampling:**

Representative sampling is the process used to verify atmospheric conditions in similar or comparable confined spaces. This method meets the requirements of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation if conditions within the space are not expected to change.

### **Education and Training:**

Employees must be familiar with hazard identification, entry procedures, and confined space communication protocols prior to performing any work in a confined space.

Examples include:

- Attics
- Electrical vaults
- Septic/sewer vaults
- Large boilers
- Large water storage tanks
- Dust Collectors
- Crawl Spaces

### **Assignment of Work**

Work in low hazard atmosphere confined spaces shall only be assigned to employees who:

- Have received the required education and training.
- Understand the risks associated with confined spaces.
- Have demonstrated proficiency in working within the appropriate safe written work procedures.



### **Availability of a Standby Employee**

Where work is required in a low-risk confined space, the supervisor shall ensure that a standby employee is available for the duration of the work project and shall ensure:

- There is a continuous means of summoning the standby person.
- The standby person checks on the employee at least every 20 minutes.
- The form of communication to be used for interval checks is confirmed.
- The standby person has the means to immediately summon rescue personnel.

### **Prior to Entry**

Prior to entering the low-risk confined space, the assigned employee shall:

- Confirm that the conditions used to support representative sampling have not changed since the last assessment.
- Review the work location within the confined space and communicate it to the standby person.
- Test all communication equipment to ensure it is functioning properly.
- Establish communication intervals with the standby employee, not exceeding 20 minutes.
- Open or remove the access hatch to the confined space.
- Conduct a visual inspection to confirm that current conditions are consistent with those identified during representative sampling; report any changes prior to entry.
- Check for unusual odors or signs of contamination and report any concerns (including symptoms such as dizziness or nausea) prior to entry.

### **Upon Entry**

Upon entry and prior to beginning the work, the assigned employee shall:

- Proceed to the work area while continuously monitoring environmental conditions through visual observation and awareness of any unusual odors.
- Confirm that communication equipment is functioning properly.

### **Confined Space Rescue**

Rescue procedures shall be conducted in accordance with the Pacific Rim School District's rescue plan, as developed and reviewed by a qualified and certified third-party provider.

### **Confined Space Inventory**

The Pacific Rim School District has compiled an inventory of all known confined spaces within the District. This inventory is available from District Health and Safety and within Operations Teams Safety Documents. This list will be reviewed and updated as necessary.



### **Notification**

Supervisors must be notified prior to any entry into an attic or crawlspace. A designated onsite contact must also be informed when entry begins and again when the work is complete or the employee has exited the space.

### **Review**

This program will be reviewed on an annual basis and updated as necessary to address changes in regulatory requirements or identified operational issues

### **RESOURCES AND REFERENCES**

Confined Space Policy  
WorkSafeBC – OHS Regulation Part 9: Confined Space  
[SD70 CS Inventory June 2025.pdf](#)