Confined Space Procedure

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Purpose:

The purpose of this procedure is to outline the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) requirements in Department of Education and Training (the Department) workplaces for [confined spaces](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/management/Pages/definedohsterms.aspx).

Scope:

This procedure applies to all Department workplaces, including schools, central and regional offices.

Procedure

**No Department employee is to enter a confined space at any time.**

A confined space within this procedure is defined as:

* an enclosed or partially enclosed space with restricted entry and exit
* an oxygen concentration outside the safe oxygen range, see section 3.5.4 of this procedure
* a concentration of airborne contaminants that may cause impairment, loss of consciousness or asphyxiation, see section 3.5.4 of this procedure
* a concentration of flammable airborne contaminant that may cause injury from fire or explosion, see section 3.5.4 of this procedure
* engulfment in any stored substance (e.g. grain, sand or saw dust), except liquids.

Examples include: storage tanks, silos, ducts, chimney, underground sewer, or well or any shaft or trench.

## Identifying a confined space at the workplace

The[**Workplace Manager**](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/management/Pages/definedohsterms.aspx) and/or [**Management OHS Nominee**](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/management/Pages/definedohsterms.aspx) are to ensure a suspected confined space is identified within the workplace in consultation with the [Victorian School Building Authority](http://www.schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au/Pages/Contact-us.aspx) and the OHS Advisory Service on ph. 1300 074 715 or email [safety@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:safety@edumail.vic.gov.au).

The **Workplace Manager** and/or **Management OHS Nominee** are to record an identified confined space in the ‘Hazard Type’ column in the *OHS Risk Register.* This should be communicated to all employees and [Health and Safety Representative](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/management/Pages/definedohsterms.aspx) (HSR).

## Confined space hazard identification

The **Workplace Manager** and/or **Management OHS Nominee** in consultation with employees and HSR are to identify the types of [hazards](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/management/Pages/definedohsterms.aspx) associated with a confined space and record them in the ‘Hazard Description’ column in the *OHS Risk Register*. Examples include:

* loss of consciousness, injury or death due to immediate effects of airborne contaminants
* fire or explosion from the ignition of flammable contaminants
* asphyxiation resulting from oxygen deficiency or from stored material e.g. grain
* restricted means of entry and exit e.g. a drain with only one entry/exit point
* contact with micro-organisms, such as viruses, bacteria or fungi potentially resulting in infectious disease, dermatitis or lung conditions
* noise generated in the confined space from the use of plant
* hazardous manual handling

## Record confined space risk controls

The **Workplace Manager** and/or **Management OHS Nominee** in consultation with employees and HSR are to identify, implement and record [risk](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/management/Pages/definedohsterms.aspx) [controls](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/management/Pages/definedohsterms.aspx) to manage a confined space, in the *OHS Risk Register*, using the hierarchy of controls. Examples include:

1. **Elimination** – no persons are to enter a confined space, but instead, are to undertake work outside the space e.g. use of a high-pressure hose through an access hatch to clean the inside of a tank, or use a remote camera to inspect the area.
2. **Substitution** – use of electrical equipment/plant instead of fuel to avoid the build-up of carbon monoxide fumes (where a flammable atmosphere has not been identified)
3. **Engineering** – install local extraction ventilation system.
4. **Administration** – develop and prominently display a *Confined Space Entry Permit* near the work area.
5. **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** – use of eye protection or respiratory protective equipment e.g. self-contained breathing apparatus, when required.

## Additional controls

### Securing a confined space

The **Workplace Manager** and/or **Management OHS Nominee** must ensure that a confined space is secured by ensuring the space is locked, or by installing a Gas and Air Tight Inspection Cover (GATIC) to prevent access by unauthorised personnel.

### 3.4.2 Signage

The **Workplace Manager** and/or **Management OHS Nominee** must ensure that a confined space has signage at all entry points to the space. The signage must:

* state that area is a confined space
* state that a *Confined Space Entry Permit* is required for entry, and warn that personnel not listed on the permit are unauthorised to enter the confined space.

## Confined space contractor responsibilities

The **Workplace Manager** and/or **Management OHS Nominee** are to approve all contractors engaged to undertake works as per the *Contractor OHS Management Procedure.*

### Contractor training requirements

The **Workplace Manager** and/or **Management OHS Nominee** are to engage a qualified contractor for works to be conducted in a confined space. All contractors must provide evidence of the following completed qualifications:

* DEFWHS010-Identify confined space
* RIIWHS202D-Enter and work in confined spaces
* PUASAR025A-Underatke confined space rescue

### Safe Work Method Statements

The **Workplace Manager** and/or **Management OHS Nominee** are to ensure the contractor supplies a *Safe Work Method Statement (*SWMS) or equivalent, for any work to be conducted in a confined space, as mandated by the Department. The **Workplace Manager** and/or **Management OHS Nominee** must review and sign the SWMS or equivalent, to verify it has been sighted and retain a copy. The SWMS or equivalent, at minimum, must include the following:

* Safety observer and contact details.
* Continuous communication system.
* Warning notice / barricades.
* Emergency equipment and PPE (e.g. harness).
* Emergency plan that can be initiated from outside the confined space (e.g. rescue procedures and first aid, in and outside the confined space).

### 3.5.3 Confined Space Entry Permit

The **Workplace Manager** and/or **Management OHS Nominee** in consultation with the contractor are to complete and sign a *Confined Space Entry Permit* prior to the commencement of any works in a confined space.

Each *Confined Space Entry Permit* is valid for a maximum of twenty four hours and only the works and timeframe listed are covered by each permit. If the scope of work changes, the confined space work is to cease immediately and a new *Confined Space Entry Permit* is to be re-issued.

The **Workplace Manager** is to retain a copy of the completed *Confined Space Entry Permit*.

### 3.5.4 Conducting atmospheric testing and monitoring

A contractor is responsible for ensuring a safe atmosphere, so far as reasonably practicable during confined space work. A safe atmosphere in a confined space is one that:

* has a safe oxygen level (oxygen level is within a safe range 19.5% and 23.5%
* is free of atmospheric contaminants or contaminants are below their exposure standard
* has any flammable gas or vapour in the atmosphere below 5% of its [lower explosive limit](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/safetyhw/Pages/definedohsterms.aspx)

Where a flammable atmosphere may exist in a confined space all ignition sources in the vicinity must be eliminated (e.g. sparking, electrical tools, or open flames etc.)

The contractor is to record the results of the testing in the *Confined Space Entry Permit.*

**3.5.5 Purging of a confined space**

If the confined space atmosphere is unsafe, the contractor is to ensure that the confined space is cleared of all contaminants by purging. This is done by using an inert gas, such as nitrogen, to clear flammable gases or vapours before work in the confined space begins. The contractor is to record the results of the purging in the *Confined Space Entry Permit.*

**3.5.6 Ventilation of a confined space**

After purging, the contractor is to ensure the confined space is adequately ventilated with sufficient fresh air, by natural (dilution) or mechanical means. The contractor is to consider where fresh air is drawn from and where the exhaust air is vented to, so that fresh air is not contaminated. Mechanical ventilation should be monitored by the contractor to ensure continuous operation while the confined space is occupied.

The contractor is to record the type of ventilation used in the *Confined Space Entry Permit*.

**3.5.7 Communication and establishment of emergency procedures**

The contractor is responsible for ensuring:

* + - communications systems are established to ensure continuous contact between contractors inside and outside the space
    - the role of the Contractor Safety Observer is established to continuously monitor the contractors inside the space, as well as the atmospheric monitoring equipment, ventilation devices and initiate emergency procedures, when necessary
    - rehearsing emergency procedures to demonstrate the specific rescue plan for the space is effective.

## 4. Incident reporting

The **Workplace Manager** is to ensure all hazards, incidents and injuries are reported on eduSafePlus.

## 5. Defined Terms

All terms defined by the Department are hyperlinked to the Department’s  [Defined Health, Safety Terms](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/management/Pages/definedohsterms.aspx) webpage. Defined roles will appear in **bold**.

## Related references:

*Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*

*Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017*

*WorkSafe Victoria Confined Space Compliance Code*

## Related documentation:

*Confined Space Entry Permit*

*Contractor OHS Management Procedure*

*OHS Risk Register*

*Safe Work Method Statement*

## Further assistance

Further information, advice or assistance is available by contacting the OHS Advisory Service on ph. 1300 074 715 or email [safety@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:safety@edumail.vic.gov.au).