Confined spaces toolbox talk

Excavation and structures · about 5 minutes · read it out, or say it in your own words

SITE OR JOB	DATE	PRESENTER

Small builders and plumbers in South Africa regularly work in manholes, sewer connections, septic and conservancy tanks, water tanks, sumps, deep pits and crawl spaces. The air in these places can be short of oxygen or full of toxic or flammable gas with no warning smell, and people die when they go in, and again when a mate rushes in to help. The General Safety Regulations set strict rules before anyone enters.

SAY THIS

What is a confined space

A confined space is any enclosed or partly enclosed place where dangerous gas, fumes or dust can build up or where there may not be enough oxygen. On our jobs that means manholes and sewers, septic and conservancy tanks, water tanks and reservoirs, sumps, deep pits and chambers, large pipes and ducts, and sometimes a closed-in roof void or basement. If it has a small way in and out, and poor air movement, treat it as a confined space.

Why it kills

You cannot trust your nose. Some deadly gases have no smell, and others knock out your sense of smell. Sewers and tanks can hold gas from rotting waste. A petrol pump, generator or gas torch running in or near the space can fill it with fumes, and oxygen can be used up just by rust or rotting material. A person can collapse within moments, without warning.

Nobody goes in without permission

Nobody enters a confined space unless the supervisor has arranged it. Before entry, a competent person must test the air and confirm in writing that it is safe and will stay safe for the work. Pipes and valves that could let in water, sewage or gas must be blocked off or locked. If the air cannot be made safe, entry is only with breathing apparatus, a harness and line, and a trained person standing by outside.

Never run in to help

If someone inside collapses or stops answering, do not go in after them. Many deaths in confined spaces are rescuers who went in to help a friend. Shout for help, call the emergency numbers on the site board, and use the line attached to their harness to pull them out from outside if it is set up. Only trained people with breathing apparatus may go in.

Keep the space safe

Never run a generator, compressor, petrol pump or gas heater inside or near the opening. Keep the standby person at the entrance the whole time, not off fetching tools. Barricade open manholes and tanks so nobody falls in. If anyone inside feels dizzy, gets a headache or feels sick, everyone gets out at once and reports it.

CHECK ON SITE TODAY

- [ ] Is there any manhole, tank, sump, pit, pipe or chamber on this site that someone may need to enter today?
- [ ] Has the air been tested by a competent person, and is the written permission to enter on site?
- [ ] Are the pipes, valves and inlets that could flood the space blocked off or locked?
- [ ] Who is the standby person, are they trained in resuscitation, and is the harness, line and rescue equipment ready?
- [ ] Are generators, pumps and compressors well away from the opening?
- [ ] Are open manholes and tank openings covered or barricaded?

ASK THE CREW

- ? Which places on this site or our recent jobs would you call a confined space?
- ? What would you do if your mate went quiet down a manhole?
- ? Why is it dangerous to run a petrol pump in a pit or tank?
- ? Have you ever been asked to go into a tank or manhole without the air being tested? What happened?

PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT FOR THIS JOB

Harness with a rescue line attended from outside · Approved breathing apparatus where the air cannot be made safe · Gas detector used by a competent person · Gloves, boots and overalls suited to the contents (for example sewage)

THE LAW

General Safety Regulations, 1986, regulation 5: Work in confined spaces; General Safety Regulations, 1986, regulation 1: Definitions ("confined space"); General Safety Regulations, 1986, regulation 9: Welding, flame cutting, soldering and similar operations. What each one says, in plain words, with links: sitediary.co.za/toolbox-talks/confined-spaces/

Toolbox talk attendance register

TOPIC

Confined spaces

DATE

SITE OR JOB

TIME

PRESENTER

COMPANY

PRESENTER SIGNATURE

By signing, I confirm that I attended this toolbox talk, that it was given in a language I understand, and that I could ask questions.

NO.	NAME AND SURNAME	COMPANY OR TRADE	SIGNATURE
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Keep this register in the site health and safety file. Log the talk in today's site diary with a photo of this page.