



GUIDANCE

Rescue from confined spaces

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Reference

- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- The Confined Spaces Regulations 1997
- Approved Code of Practice, Safe Work in Confined Spaces
- SAFed Guidelines PSG 10 — Guidelines for the application of a safe system of work for entry into a confined space
- SAFed Guidance PEC 02 — Size of access openings in boilers and pressure vessels

SITUATION

Engineer Surveyors enter confined spaces such as boilers and pressure vessels to carry out examinations and ensure that plant is suitable for continued service. Around 1000 such entries are made every week and the safety record going back many years in the UK is excellent. However in other areas such as sewer work a number of fatalities and injuries occur each year to people working in confined spaces. The fatalities and injuries include not only those working within a confined space but also those who undertake rescue procedures without the correct training or equipment.

Where there is a foreseeable need for a rescue to be required SAFed Member Companies expect owner/users to have a thorough, practical plan for rescuing any Engineer Surveyor while working in a confined space. Owner/user staff that would be involved in a rescue should be properly trained and experienced. If the owner/user is unable to provide rescue arrangements and there is a foreseeable need of a rescue being required then SAFed Member Companies reserve the right to decline to carry out the examination until suitable provision is made.

GUIDANCE

1. Foreseeable emergency scenarios

- 1.1 The rescue needs to be proportionate to the risk of an emergency occurring and cover reasonably foreseeable emergency scenarios. The main cause of an emergency arising would be from hazards in the working environment inside the confined space.
- 1.2 Hazards in the working environment should be reduced to an acceptable level by a suitable risk assessment and, where necessary, a permit to work system e.g. to ensure the confined space is isolated and does not contain hazardous substances.
- 1.3 The likelihood of an Engineer Surveyor suffering a medical emergency has been assessed as highly unlikely and can be eliminated by him/her not entering a confined space if he/she feels unwell or has a medical condition that could compromise his/her safety.
- 1.4 By implementing these measures the risk of an emergency scenario occurring should be minimised. However, emergency scenarios may occur and therefore procedures do need to be in place.
- 1.5 A procedure may need to be in place to ensure that the person in the confined space can evacuate in the event of a site emergency, e.g. fire. As a minimum it should be ensured that he/she is notified to evacuate and is provided with appropriate assistance if the fire/evacuation alarm cannot be heard inside the confined space.



2. Communication

- 2.1 There must be an adequate communication system in place to enable two way communications between those within the confined space and those outside. A person must be stationed outside the confined space at all times communicating regularly with those within the space.
- 2.3 Adequate communication facilities must be available to the person outside the confined space to summon assistance in an emergency.

3. Confined space — Risk categorisation

- 3.1 For the purpose of this document confined spaces can be categorised as low risk or higher risk.
- 3.2 Low risk confined spaces are those where there are no significant hazards and any risks are well controlled, e.g. by a permit to work. Examples would include a Stand Alone Boiler. Since 1980 SAFed Member Companies have carried out approximately 1350000 entries of such confined spaces and an emergency scenario has not occurred. Therefore the chance of an emergency occurring is assessed to be very low and the minimum rescue requirement would be a stand-by person.
- 3.3 Higher risk confined spaces are those that present a greater degree of risk, e.g. the potential ingress of hazardous substances, potential depletion of oxygen etc. For these confined spaces an emergency procedure that is proportional to the risk and relevant to the situation will be required.

4. Confined space — Rescue considerations

- 4.1 In the highly unlikely event of an Engineer Surveyor requiring treatment for a medical emergency the best method may be to treat the person in situ.
- 4.2 The use of rescue harnesses attached to a safety line may impose additional hazards. As part of the site-specific risk assessment consideration should be given to the balance of the risk associated with restriction of mobility posed by the rescue equipment and potential entanglement compared with the benefit of using the equipment for rescue purposes.
- 4.3 In an extreme emergency the only method of removing a person from the confined space may be to call the emergency services. The owner/user may want to discuss with their local emergency services.
- 4.4 The rescue procedures may include how to provide appropriate medical assistance to any injured individuals where there is a risk of physical injury.
- 4.5 Rescuers must consider their own safety before attempting a rescue.

5. Boilers and pressure equipment

- 5.1 For Guidelines on the application of a safe system of work for entry into a confined space see SAFed Guidelines PSG 10.
- 5.2 For Guidance on the size of access openings in boilers and pressure equipment consult SAFed Guidance PEC 02.