



## 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, L101 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, then SAFed Member Companies reserve the right to decline to carry out the examination until suitable provision is made. SAFed member companies may assist the client/owner/user in their responsibilities to provide a suitable rescue plan.

#### GUIDANCE

##### 1. Foreseeable emergency scenarios

- 1.1 The presence of a significant risk such as a lack of oxygen, poisonous gas, fume, vapour, dusts or residues, ingress of liquids and solids, fire and explosion and hot conditions.
- 1.2 The Engineer Surveyor experiencing ill health, injury or a medical emergency during their time within the confined space. If an Engineer Surveyor is in good health or any health condition has been assessed, receives a periodic safety critical medical and does not enter confined spaces when feeling unwell, the likelihood of an Engineer Surveyor suffering a medical emergency has been assessed as unlikely. It is the responsibility of both the SAFed member and the Engineer Surveyor to ensure that Engineers Surveyors are physically competent.

##### 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.

- 2.2 Adequate communication facilities must be available to the person outside the confined space to summon assistance in an emergency.

### **3. Safe System of Work and Rescue Considerations**

- 3.1 All confined space entry must have a documented rescue plan in place prior to entry. By implementing safety measures based on the risk an emergency scenario occurring should be minimised.
- a. The rescue plan must be proportionate to the risk, the layout of the space itself and the type and size of the opening.
  - b. The use of a rescue harness and rescue line must be mandatory unless during the risk assessment it has been assessed that the restriction of mobility posed by the rescue equipment and potential entanglement outweighs the benefit of using the equipment for rescue purposes. If a rescue harness is not worn then the rescue plan must be clear on another method to rescue the Engineer Surveyor.
  - c. The number of rescue personnel will be identified during the risk assessment. As a minimum there should be a stand by person outside the space who can communicate with the person inside the space and who can implement the rescue plan including contacting first aid assistance. Lone working must never be permitted for any confined space work.
  - d. First aid provision must be available which is appropriate for the risk. In the event of an Engineer Surveyor requiring emergency medical assistance the best method may be to treat the person in situ. The first aider must only enter the space if it is safe to do so and there is a person on the outside of the space who they are able to communicate with.
  - e. The client/owner/user is responsible for creating the rescue plan and for providing the rescue and first aid personnel; the public emergency services should not be relied upon for the rescue arrangements. There may be occasions when the confined space entry and rescue may require the assistance of the public emergency services. In this case the emergency services must be contacted during the planning of the work to discuss arrangements.
  - f. The rescue plan should include evacuation from the site in the event of a site emergency, e.g fire. As a minimum the person working in the confined space should be notified of the requirement to evacuation and be provided with appropriate assistance.
  - g. All people involved in the work must be fully informed of their responsibilities during the work and any rescue, the risk assessment and the requirements of the permit to work. Rescue personnel must be adequately trained and must consider their own safety before facilitating a rescue.
  - h. The Engineer Surveyor is responsible for assessing that the plan is suitable and sufficient. The examination must not go ahead until the Engineer Surveyor is satisfied that the safe system of work and rescue plan is adequate.

### **4. Confined space — Risk Categorisation**

- 4.1 For the purposes of this document, confined spaces can be categorised as low, medium or high risk.
- 4.2 A low risk confined space is where there are no significant risks, any residual risks are well controlled and there is no risk of flooding. Where adequate natural or mechanical ventilation exists and access is simple and unobstructed. For example, meter pits, valve chambers, booster pumping stations and PRV chambers.
- 4.3 A medium risk confined space exists where there is a specified risk, or a possibility of a specified risk being introduced during the work and/or where a person cannot be permanently attached to a safety line and/or the work moves away from the entry point. Examples include sewers, tunnels, utility services, tanks and chambers.
- 4.4 A high risk confined space exists in situations where breathing apparatus is required due to a significant risk.

### **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.