



Standard/Regulation Information

OSHA Construction Industry Confined Space Standard

Rescue/ Retrieval Related Requirements

May 2015
Rev. 7/15

On May 4, 2015, OSHA issued a final rule that applies to construction workers in confined spaces. This new rule is known as Subpart AA of part 1926 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

The overall effective date was scheduled for August 3, 2015. On July 9, 2015, OSHA announced that it is postponing full enforcement of the new standard to October 2, 2015. This will provide contractors with additional time to train and acquire equipment necessary to comply with the new standard.

OSHA estimates that the new rule will protect at least 800 construction workers per year from serious injuries and help reduce life-threatening hazards. A proposed rule for Construction Industry Confined Spaces was first published in 2007. The new rule differs from previous rules as the new rule requires employers to determine which types of spaces their workers are in, which hazards exist, what training is needed and how to rescue those workers if needed. This Construction Industry rule is similar to the existing rule for General Industry.

Who is affected?

The new rule applies to all construction employees who may be exposed to confined space hazards including those who work in sewers, manholes, crawl spaces, boilers, tanks and other spaces not intended for continuous occupancy. Work in confined spaces that are classified as permit required confined spaces have specific requirements that must be followed.

OSHA 1926.1201 thru 1926.1213

The Confined Space in Construction Subpart AA rule has many sections including definitions, general requirements, permit required confined space program, entry permit, training, duties and rescue / emergency services.

General Requirements – Some key general requirements related to this standard include identification of the confined spaces, permitting (if applicable), testing and evaluation of the confined space, specific duties and communications. The standard provides details for each of these areas.

Training – Employers must provide training to each employee whose work is covered by this standard. Training must establish employee proficiency in the duties that are required and training records must be maintained.

Rescue and Emergency Services – Employers shall evaluate a rescuer's ability to respond in a timely manner. The specific hazard involved will help determine what is considered timely. Employees who conduct rescues must be provided with proper personal protective equipment and trained in the proficient use of that equipment. Practice making rescues is required at least every twelve months, by means of a simulated rescue.

Non-entry rescue is required unless the retrieval equipment would increase the overall risk of entry. Retrieval systems must meet the following requirements:

- each entrant must use a chest or full body harness with a retrieval line attached to the center of the back or overhead, or at a point that allows for retrieval (wristlets or anklets may be used if harness use is not feasible)
- the other end of retrieval line must be attached to a mechanical device or fixed point outside the space
- a mechanical device must be available to retrieve personnel from a vertical space more than 5 ft. deep
- equipment that can become tangled or will not work because of the configuration of the space must not be used.

Summary: Major rescue/retrieval points in OSHA's new rule for Confined Spaces in Construction:

Training – Required for each employee covered by the standard. Training will cover the use of the equipment, with practice rescues performed at least every twelve months. Training records must be maintained.

Rescue Equipment – A retrieval line must be secured to the harness. The other end of the line must be attached to a mechanical device or fixed anchor point outside the space. The rescue shall begin as soon as rescue is necessary.

A mechanical type of rescue device must be available to retrieval personnel from vertical type permit required spaces more than 5 ft. deep.

Please review the entire OSHA regulations for complete details and requirements that apply to your applications. This document is intended as a Capital Safety summary only.