What is a Confined Space?
Confined space emergencies are rare, high-risk incidents. When they do happen, they can lead to firefighter injuries or deaths. First responders must be aware of the hazards and limitations of confined spaces so they can be prepared when they approach an incident in or around a confined space, and when they attempt to enter confined spaces during non-emergencies.

A confined space must meet all three of the following conditions:
1. It is large enough to enter and perform work.
2. It has limited or restricted means for entering or exiting.
3. It is not designed for continuous employee occupancy.

Examples include crawl spaces, grain bins, manholes, below-grade vaults, tanks of all types, elevator shafts, and some tunnels. These spaces are where people perform repairs, inspections, and maintenance, but they are not designed for an employee to work in all day.

Hazardous confined spaces
Not designed for continuous occupancy, confined spaces often have limited ventilation and other dangers that are not controlled as they would be in occupied spaces. These concerns fall into two categories — atmospheric hazards and safety hazards. Understanding these hazards will help firefighters keep themselves safe when responding to a confined space incident.

TYPES OF CONFINED SPACE HAZARDS

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<th>CATEGORY</th>
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How OSHA Regulations Apply
Employers in the United States are required to comply with the applicable Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) regulations for entry into confined spaces in industrial settings and general workplace settings (1910.146), shipyards (1915 Subpart B), and construction (1926 Subpart AAA). These regulations are minimum standards for safety, and they are performance-based, so they describe what you must do to comply but do not tell you how to do it. To understand the how, refer to NFPA® 1670 to learn about levels of confined space rescue and NFPA® 350 for safe entry steps during non-emergencies. See www.osha.gov/SLTC/confinedspaces/

NFPA Resources That Can Help
NFPA has two documents that address the topic of confined space. This fact sheet provides awareness level information on NFPA 350, Guide for Safe Confined Space Entry and Work, and NFPA 1670, Standard on Operations and Training for Technical Search and Rescue Incidents. For information on search and rescue for confined spaces, see Chapter 7 of NFPA 1670.

NFPA 350 is a guide that was developed for workers who enter confined spaces for inspection, testing, or associated work and to protect them from death, injuries, or illnesses. It also aims to help protect facilities, equipment, non–confined space personnel, and the public from injuries associated with confined space incidents.

Visit www.nfpa.org/350 for more information and links to the following:
- A 5-minute informational video on confined spaces
- NFPA 350 available for viewing or purchase
- Information on NFPA 350 training

NFPA 1670 is the standard for efficiently and effectively conducting technical search and rescue operations while minimizing threats to rescuers. It is intended to help assess a technical search and rescue hazard within the response area, identify the level of operational capability, and establish operational criteria.

Visit www.nfpa.org/1670 for the latest information on the standard.


For more of these resources, become an NFPA member

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