

OCM1

Offshore COSHH essentials



This information will help offshore dutyholders (owners, operators and contractors) to protect workers' health.

It is aimed at staff whose responsibilities include the management of risk of confined space entry. It is also useful for safety advisors, occupational health specialists, trade union and employee safety representatives.

Following the guidance is not compulsory and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow this guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance as illustrating good practice.

If you need a service provider (eg consultant), OCM sheets describe what they should deliver.

You may need help from a health and safety expert, whose report should cover the points in this sheet.

Offshore installations are not specifically covered by the Confined Spaces Regulations 1997. However the guidance in the Approved Code of Practice L101 can be used as a source of good practice.

Confined spaces

Control approach 4 Special advice

What this sheet covers

This sheet describes issues to cover in method statements for safe work in confined spaces.

Action

- ✓ Involve the offshore medic and emergency response team, first aiders and employees in emergency planning.
- ✓ If you are in doubt, get help from an expert. Ask your trade association, trade union or log onto www.oshcr.org/ for a list of consultants.

Hazards

- ✓ A confined space can be any space of an enclosed nature, where there is a risk of death or serious injury. This could be from hazardous substances, or from lack of oxygen.
- ✓ Less obvious confined spaces include open-topped chambers, ductwork and poorly-ventilated rooms.
- ✓ Some places can become confined spaces because of the work carried out in them, or by poisonous gases such as hydrogen sulphide seeping in.
- ✓ Natural processes such as rusting or fermentation can cause oxygen depletion or gases that displace oxygen from the enclosed space.

Areas

- ✓ Restrict access to authorised personnel only.
- ✓ If possible avoid entry to undertake the task
- ✓ If entry is unavoidable ensure there is a safe system of work.
- ✓ Ensure that there are emergency arrangements in place before work starts.

Procedures

Safe system of work

- ✓ Ensure that people developing the safe system of work have the correct competency.
- ✓ Identify the precautions that will reduce the risk. A permit-to-work is needed.



- ✓ Ensure that the workers selected are competent and physically able to do the task.
- ✓ Isolate mechanical and electrical equipment that could cause harm if turned on.
- ✓ Ensure access routes and hatches are large enough and rescue harnesses are usable.
- ✓ Ventilate the area before entry and ensure good general ventilation during work activities, if this is not possible provide mechanical ventilation.

Caution: Never use fuelled engines in confined spaces. Carbon monoxide is very dangerous.

- ✓ Test the air before entry, and monitor the air during the procedure.
- ✓ Have an authorised tester perform the gas test.
- ✓ If required wear breathing apparatus, workers should check that it is working properly.

Caution: Never try to 'sweeten' the air with oxygen. This increases the fire or explosion risk.

- ✓ Ensure alarms are in place and that they were audible when last tested.
- ✓ Use non-sparking tools or flameproof lighting for the task.
- ✓ Ensure that people inside the space can communicate with those outside.
- ✓ Where multiple entry occurs, ensure workers are checked in and out.

Emergency procedures

- ✓ When things go wrong, you need effective arrangements for rapid rescue of those in danger.
- ✓ A specific plan is needed for an identified confined space, the risks, the number of people at work, and the likely nature of any emergency rescue.
- ✓ Critical requirements include defining:
 - means for communication between workers and rescuers;
 - the rescuers' capabilities and training;
 - the rescue and resuscitation equipment needs; and
 - any emergency shut-down of plant or equipment
- ✓ Train everyone involved. Hold practices and modify your procedures to improve the performance.

This guidance was developed by representatives from the UK offshore oil and gas industry and trade unions, with HSE.

Further information

Safe work in confined spaces
Leaflet INDG258 HSE Books
1997 (priced packs of 20
ISBN 978 0 7176 1442 4)
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg258.pdf

Safe work in confined spaces. Confined Spaces Regulations 1997. Approved Code of Practice, Regulations and guidance L101 HSE Books
2009

ISBN 978 0 7176 6233 3
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l101.htm

Note: the Confined Spaces Regulations do not apply offshore but L101 is a source of good practice

Useful links

Occupational Safety and Health Consultants Register
www.oshcr.org/

Further information

You can find the full Offshore COSHH essentials series at
www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/index.htm