Confined Space Entry Procedure

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Purpose and Scope

This Confined Space Entry Procedure sets out the minimum Work Health and Safety (WHS) requirements for safely planning, assessing, and undertaking any work involving confined spaces at [Company Name]. It is designed to prevent serious injury, illness and fatalities arising from atmospheric hazards, engulfment, entrapment, falls, or other risks associated with confined space work.

This procedure applies to all:

- [Company Name] workers (including employees, apprentices and trainees)
- labour hire workers
- subcontractors and their workers
- visitors and other persons who may be involved in or affected by confined space work.

Typical confined space activities covered by this procedure include, but are not limited to:

- Plumbing and gasfitting work in pits, manholes, sewer chambers, tanks, and service ducts
- Civil construction and earthworks – stormwater and sewer systems, culverts, valve pits, and access chambers
- Mining and resources tasks in ore passes, sumps, storage bins, process vessels and underground voids
- Air conditioning and refrigeration works in plant rooms, ceiling and roof voids, ductwork and large air handling units where confined space criteria are met.

This procedure must be read in conjunction with [Company Name]'s WHS Management System, Safe Work Method Statements (SWMS), risk assessments, and relevant Australian Standards.

Definitions

Confined Space

For the purpose of this procedure, a confined space is an enclosed or partially enclosed space that:

1. is not designed or intended to be occupied by a person; and
2. is, or is designed or intended to be, at normal atmospheric pressure while any person is in the space; and
3. is or is likely to be a risk to health and safety from:
   - an atmosphere that does not have a safe oxygen level, or
   - contaminants, including airborne gases, vapours and dusts, that may cause injury from fire or explosion, or
   - harmful concentrations of any airborne contaminants, or

  - engulfment.

Common examples in the target industries include:

- Plumbing and Gasfitting: sewer and stormwater manholes, pump stations, inspection chambers, storage tanks
- Civil Construction and Earthworks: culverts, valve pits, access chambers, large diameter pipelines, caissons
- Mining and Resources: ore bins, sumps, hoppers, process vessels, underground voids and headings not ventilated for regular access
- Air Conditioning and Refrigeration: large ductwork, plant rooms with restricted access and limited ventilation, evaporative cooling towers, chiller shells.

Other Key Definitions

- **Atmospheric testing**: The use of calibrated gas detection equipment to measure oxygen levels, flammable gases/vapours, and toxic contaminants.
- **Authorised person**: A person appointed by [Company Name] who is competent to issue confined space entry permits.
- **Competent person**: A person who has acquired, through training, qualification or experience the knowledge and skills to carry out the task.
- **Confined space entry permit**: A written authorisation that sets out the control measures, conditions and duration for entry into a confined space.
- **Engulfment**: The immersion or envelopment of a person by a material (e.g. sand, soil, grain, water, slurry) that can be inhaled, swallowed or drown or suffocate a person.
- **Isolation**: Physically preventing the introduction of any materials, substances, or energy into the confined space (e.g. lock-out/tag-out, blanking, blinding, double block and bleed).
- **Standby person**: A person who remains outside the confined space, continuously monitors the workers inside, and initiates emergency response if required.

Roles and Responsibilities

Officers and Senior Management

- Ensure adequate resources (people, equipment, training, and time) are provided to implement this procedure.
- Verify that confined space risks are identified in the WHS risk register and that appropriate controls are in place.
- Monitor WHS performance relating to confined space work, including incident trends and audit findings.

Managers and Supervisors

- Ensure all confined space work is planned and authorised in accordance with this procedure.
- Confirm that risk assessments and SWMS are completed, reviewed and understood by workers.
- Ensure only competent and trained workers are assigned to confined space tasks.
- Verify that atmospheric testing, isolation, ventilation, and emergency arrangements are in place before any entry.
- Suspend or stop work if controls are not adequate or conditions change.

Confined Space Permit Issuer (Authorised Person)

- Review the proposed confined space work, including drawings, P&IDs, and previous permits.
- Confirm that the space meets the definition of a confined space.
- Ensure a task-specific risk assessment and SWMS have been completed.
- Specify control measures in the permit, including PPE, isolation points, testing frequency, communication methods, and emergency arrangements.
- Verify, before signing the permit:
  - Isolations are in place and locked/tagged
  - Atmospheric testing has been completed and is within acceptable limits
  - standby person and rescue equipment are in place.
- Set the permit validity period and revalidation requirements.
- Cancel or suspend the permit if conditions change or controls are not effective.

Confined Space Entrants (Workers Entering the Space)

- Participate in pre-start briefings and confirm understanding of the permit conditions and SWMS.
- Use the required PPE, respiratory protection, and safety equipment as specified.
- Follow entry and exit procedures, including sign-in/sign-out requirements.
- Maintain communication with the standby person at all times.
- Immediately report any change in conditions (e.g. odours, difficulty breathing, equipment malfunction) and exit the space if instructed or if unsafe.

Standby Person

- Remain at the confined space entry point for the duration of the work.