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2026 Cal-OSHA Confined Space Entry Updates

From the desk of.....*Jim Persons*

Confined Space Safety Standards:

Cal/OSHA's updated confined space safety regulations for construction will take effect January 1, 2026.

These updates include definitions and employer requirements for identifying and managing confined spaces.

California's revised regulations on Construction Safety orders include updated definitions for:

- Entry Employer
- Hazardous Atmospheres
- Lockout/Tagout
- Minimum Explosive Concentrations

The revised regulations require employers to:

- Identify confined spaces.
- Evaluate permit-required spaces, utilizing a competent person for the initial survey of the work area and the identification of the permit-required confined spaces at the time work begins.
- Employers are also required to communicate when a new confined space is discovered or created.

As with California Code of Regulations, Title 8, General Industry Standard,

A “confined space” means a space that:

- (1) is large enough and so configured that an employee can bodily enter it,
- (2) has limited or restricted means for entry and exit, and
- (3) is not designed for continuous employee occupancy.

“Permit-required confined space” (“permit space”) means a confined space that has one or more of the following characteristics:

- (1) Contains or has a potential to contain a hazardous atmosphere;”
- (2) Contains a material that has the potential for engulfing an entrant;”
- (3) Has an internal configuration such that an entrant could be trapped or asphyxiated by inwardly converging walls or by a floor which slopes downward and tapers to a smaller cross-section;” or
- (4) Contains any other recognized serious safety or health hazard.”

“Entry employer” is broadly defined and includes “any employer whose employees enter or will enter a permit space.”

Entry employers must have a written permit space program implemented at the construction site.

What Should Contractors Do?

California construction employers must update their current confined space entry program to reflect these changes.