

## **Confined Spaces**

Confined spaces, though not generally affiliated with land survey, do exist around us while working on locations, in particular to construction and oil & gas industry sites.

Though not necessarily called to enter "confined spaces" in the normal course of survey work, it is important to be aware of what defines a confined space, and the hazards associated with them.

Confined spaces may be encountered in virtually any occupation; therefore, their recognition is the first step in preventing potential injury. Injuries (and fatalities) in confined spaces often occur because the atmosphere is oxygen-deficient or toxic. Confined spaces should be tested prior to entry and continually monitored.

Many workplaces contain spaces that are considered "confined" because their configurations hinder the activities of any employees who must enter, work in, and exit them. For example, employees who work in process vessels generally must squeeze in and out through narrow openings and perform their tasks in difficult to access areas.

Alberta OH&S regulation defines "confined space" as being:

*"an enclosed or partially enclosed space that is not designed or intended for continuous human occupancy with a restricted means of entry or exit and may become hazardous to a worker entering it because;*

- (a) of its design, construction, location or atmosphere*
- (b) of the work activities, materials or substances in it*
- (c) the provision of first aid, evacuation, rescue or other emergency response service is compromised*
- (d) of other hazards relating to it"*

*(Alberta) Occupational Health and Safety Code 2006, Part 1, page 1-5*

- Grain storage containers
- Pulp Mills
- Irrigation Ditches
- Single Egress Structures
- Containers or Tanks
- Pressure vessels
- Trenches
- Restricted access structures
- Enclosed structures with potentially hazardous atmospheres

The first steps an employer can do are to evaluate the current work sites for these potential hazards and immediately communicate them to the personnel working.

If a 'confined space' is identified, that is accessed during the normal course of working, first review Part 5 "Confined Spaces" of the (Alberta) Occupational Health and Safety Code 2006, and contact your local Workplace Health and Safety branch for guidance in adequate measures to be taken.

Both Enform and the Alberta Safety Construction Association have available "Confined Space" training courses, for employers and workers.

For further information, consult:

- Alberta OH&S Code, Part 5 – Confined Spaces
- Alberta Human Resources and Employment, OHS Code; [www.hre.gov.ab.ca](http://www.hre.gov.ab.ca)
- Enform; [www.enform.ca](http://www.enform.ca)
- Alberta Construction Safety Association; [www.acsa-safety.org](http://www.acsa-safety.org)