

Confined Spaces on the Farm

Stats and Facts

FACTS

1. Hazards Of Confined Spaces Include:

- Toxic atmospheres
- Entrapment by material i.e. grain
- Falls into pits
- Exposure to engine driven gases. Petrol engines produce carbon monoxide; diesel engines will deprive the atmosphere of oxygen.
- Electrocutions from electrical equipment that might be introduced into the confined space

2. Manure pits undergo anaerobic digestive fermentation to form fertilizer. The digestive process can generate four potentially dangerous gases:

- Methane
- Hydrogen sulfide
- Carbon dioxide
- Ammonia

3. Harmful fumes or low oxygen atmospheres are common in many confined spaces on farms. There is also the risk of suffocation inside a silo if stored grain or fertiliser collapses. The safest approach with any confined space is to avoid entry.

STATS

- There have been nine deaths in confined spaces on farms in the last five years. Two or more workers died when rescue was attempted without appropriate safety equipment and procedures. 39% of the victims in confined-space incidents were coworkers or others who attempted to rescue the initial

victim.

- About 2.1 million workers enter permit confined spaces annually. Approximately 60 % of confined-space fatalities are rescuers, when multiple deaths occur during a rescue, the majority of the victims are “would-be” rescuers.

Other findings of confined space incidents:

- 85% of the time a SUPERVISOR was present.
- 29% of the dead were SUPERVISORS.
- 31% had WRITTEN Confined Space Entry PROCEDURES.
- 0% used the WRITTEN PROCEDURES.
- 15% had Confined Space TRAINING.
- 0% had a RESCUE PLAN.
- 60% of “WOULD-BE” RESCUERS died.
- 95% were AUTHORIZED by supervision.
- 0% of the spaces were TESTED prior to entry.
- 0% were VENTILATED