## **How to determine whether a space is a confined space**

Asking the following questions will help you determine whether a space is a ‘confined space’ for purposes of the OHS&W Regulations.

***A. Is the space enclosed or partially enclosed and not designed to be primarily occupied or entered by a person?***

Places such as offices and workshops are intended for human occupancy and generally have adequate ventilation, lighting and safe means of entry and exit. This means that these kinds of workplaces are not confined spaces for purposes of the OHS&W Regulations.

Some enclosed or partially enclosed spaces may have atmospheric contaminants that are harmful to persons but are designed for a person to occupy, for example abrasive blasting or spray painting booths. These would also generally not be confined spaces.

The size of the space is not relevant when working out whether a space is a confined space for purposes of the OHS&W Regulations.



***B. Is it likely to be entered and is it at normal atmospheric pressure while a person is in the space?***

Entry to a confined space is considered to have occurred when a person’s head or upper body enters the space, or if the person is close enough to the opening that there is a risk that they could accidentally enter the confined space (for example, if they are overcome by harmful gases).



***C. Does the space have a restricted means of entry and exit?***

The entry or exit to the space may be restricted by the size of the opening and/or its location. This may affect whether the space is physically difficult to get in or out of and whether it would be difficult to remove an injured or unconscious person from the space.



***D. Does the space present a risk from a dangerous atmosphere or a risk of engulfment?***

A space is a confined space if it meets all of the other criteria for confined spaces (if the answer is ‘yes’ to A, B and C above) and it presents a risk to health and safety from one or more of the following:

* an atmosphere that does not have a safe oxygen level (a safe oxygen level means an oxygen content in air of between 19.5% – 23.5%), 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 from any substance, for example:
	+ any liquid such as oil or water in which a person can drown
	+ any solid such as fly ash, grain, sawdust and sand that can flow and form a temporary cavity or bridge, which may collapse and surround a person, cutting off their air supply.

Airborne contaminants are considered to be harmful if they are present at a concentration above the allowable exposure standard for the contaminant, or if the airborne contaminant is likely to have an adverse health effect.

A space may become a confined space if work that is to be carried out in the space would generate harmful concentrations of airborne contaminants. Temporary control measures such as providing temporary ventilation or achieving a satisfactory pre-entry gas test will not cause a confined space to be declassified.