

Permit-Required vs. Non-Permit-Required Confined Spaces



Confined spaces require an abundance of caution, but there are differences in safety precautions between permit-required and non-permit-required spaces.

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In some instances where electricians will need to work in certain confined spaces like crawlspaces, they may need a permit. A confined space permit is a document that states the safety procedures required when entering a confined space. Supervisors, entry teams, and everyone else on the job site need to be aware of the permit, check it before entry, and make sure all of the equipment listed on it passes inspections. A permit will include the name or location of the site, the specifics of the job, when you're doing it, the names of the people on site, identified hazards, gas detector readings, an equipment list, and detailed emergency procedures. Dialing 911 does not qualify as a procedure.

Permits are one way to ensure safety in the workplace, but not all spaces require permits. While it doesn't hurt to treat all unknown confined spaces as permit-required, workers and rescuers alike should be aware of the



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differences between these types of spaces in terms of their specific threats and the necessary precautions. Here's what you need to know about the ones that do and don't require them.

Non-permit confined spaces

Confined spaces are large enough for workers to enter, but have limited or restricted means of entry and exit. There isn't a lot of ventilation inside these spaces, and they're not designed for long-term or continuous worker occupancy. They include areas like tunnels, sewers, and other industrial spaces. However, while safety is always important in a confined space (and you should never assume that a space isn't dangerous), not all confined spaces require permits.

Permit-required confined spaces

For a space to require a permit, it needs to meet the above requirements for a confined space, but with other elements that make entry and work more complex or dangerous, potentially immediately. An example would be a tank or vessel. They almost always have a small entrance or opening with many potential hazards, coupled with difficult means of extracting an injured worker.

Permit-required confined spaces need to meet additional criteria. This can include a hazardous atmosphere or the potential to contain one, where water, grain, or petroleum products are involved and can engulf the entrant. An internal design that can trap or asphyxiate workers inside, especially if

toxic gases are present or other safety hazards. Remember that conditions inside of a confined space can change quickly, and even those that weren't marked as permit-required can require a permit as changes happen.



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Confined space equipment and requirements

Regardless of whether your work site requires a permit, all of your confined space entry equipment should be on-site, close at hand, and functioning properly. Having a competent person stationed outside may be the single best investment in your safety when performing this type of work.

Depending on your confined space, you'll probably need ventilation, respiration equipment, protective clothing, gas monitoring equipment, communication equipment with fresh batteries, non-sparking tools, and retrieval equipment appropriate for your space. Don't rely on your memory

when the lives of your workers could be on the line: use a checklist to make sure that no one is entering without lifesaving equipment, even if your site doesn't require a permit, and always err on the side of caution.

Rick Pedley, PK Safety's President and CEO, joined the family business in 1979. PK Safety, a supplier of occupational safety and personal protective equipment, has been operating since 1947 and takes OSHA, ANSI, PPE, and CSA work safety equipment seriously. PK Safety's customer service can be reached at 800-829-9580 or online at <https://www.pksafety.com/contact-us/>.

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