

# CAL/OSHA UPDATES CONFINED SPACES REGULATION



UPDATED CAL/OSHA confined spaces regulations for construction took effect Jan. 1, creating a standalone set of rules that separate construction requirements from general industry standards.

The rules clarify procedures for entry permits, rescue operations and emergency medical response related to permit-required confined spaces. The changes were adopted by the California Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board and approved by the Office of Administrative Law.

Here are the changes:

- The revised rules apply specifically to confined spaces in construction and are now separate from general industry confined space standards enforced by Cal/OSHA.
- Employers are required to identify all confined spaces at a construction site and evaluate which of those spaces are permit-required confined spaces.
- Such employers are known as “entry employers,” the definition of which has been broadened to include any employer whose employees enter or may enter a permit-required confined space, even if that employer did not create the space.
- Entry employers must implement a written permit-required confined space program at the construction site.
- A “permit-required confined space” is defined as one that may contain a hazardous atmosphere, present an engulfment hazard, have inwardly converging walls or sloped floors, or contain any other recognized serious safety or health hazard.

Employers are required to communicate when a new confined space is discovered or created.

- A “competent person” must conduct an initial survey of the work area to identify confined spaces when work begins and when new confined spaces are discovered or created.
- The definition of “confined space” aligns with federal standards and includes spaces that are large enough for bodily entry, have limited means of entry or exit, and are not designed for continuous occupancy.
- Definitions for terms such as hazardous atmosphere, lockout, tagout and minimum explosive concentration are updated.
- Employers must maintain documentation related to confined space identification, permits and procedures, which may require changes to job-site recordkeeping practices.

Construction employers may want to review and update their confined space programs, training and inspection processes to ensure compliance with the revised regulations now in effect.

## Types of confined spaces

- Tanks
- Underground vaults
- Water and sewer pipes
- Storage bins
- Pits
- Silos
- Boilers
- Hoppers