

Setting Up Confined Space Rescue

Would-be rescuers are the most at risk when it comes to confined spaces. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) estimates that more than 60 percent of confined space fatalities occur to those attempting to rescue someone else. (See link to NIOSH report [here](#)) Establishing a Permit Required Confined Space Rescue program is more than important, it is vital and it is an OSHA requirement.

When entering a confined space where there are hazards (Permit Required), OSHA requires that you have rescue services available (29 CFR 1910.146 (k) - [click here](#) to see the regulation). When discussing Confined Space Operations with our clients and students, we find that many believe they have fulfilled that requirement because there is a fire station nearby, thinking that fire department crews are emergency responders. However, just being near a fire station does not mean that you have met the requirements of the regulation. Here's why.

1. Anyone entering a confined space for any reason, including rescue, must be trained in confined space entry. The regulation, in (k)(2)(ii) states that the employer is required to *"Train affected employees to perform assigned rescue duties. The employer must ensure that such employees successfully complete the training required to establish proficiency as an authorized entrant, as provided by paragraphs (g) and (h) of this section."* Not all fire department crews are trained in confined space entry. Some may be, but not all crews in a department may have received that training.
2. Those entering a confined space for the purpose of rescue must have the appropriate equipment and be trained in Confined Space Rescue techniques. (k)(1)(iii)(B) says that you are to ensure that the rescue team *"Is equipped for and proficient in performing the needed rescue services."* Not all fire department crews have been trained or have the appropriate equipment for confined space rescue.
3. Anyone entering a confined space where there is a or the potential for a hazardous material, especially for the purpose of rescuing someone, should be trained in emergency response to hazardous materials. Not all fire department crews have been trained to the level of Hazardous Materials Emergency Response required by the hazardous material present in your confined space. Again, while some fire department crews have hazardous materials emergency response training, not all do.
4. Those performing confined space rescue are to have had access to

your confined spaces. (k)(1)(v) states, "*Provide the rescue team or service selected with access to all permit spaces from which rescue may be necessary so that the rescue service can develop appropriate rescue plans and practice rescue operations.*" Have the crews at the fire station you designated as your rescue team or service had adequate access to your confined spaces to develop rescue plans?

Our recommendation is that someone carefully evaluate your permit required confined spaces to see what rescue team or services you will need. This may include reading the regulation. Remember that some states do not follow Federal OSHA requirements which we referenced here, but have their own requirements. For example, California's confined space rescue requirements are more restrictive than the federal requirements. (California's Confined Space Regulation [linked here](#))

Before writing the fire department's phone number on a confined space permit as your designated emergency response team or service, someone should contact the fire department to make sure they are certified to perform confined space rescues.

Take a few minutes to read what OSHA says about evaluating and selecting your Rescue Team or Service in Appendix F to the Confined Space regulation on ([click here](#) for the link to Appendix F). Their step by step recommended process will be quite helpful for you.

If you need Confined Space Entry, Attendant or Supervisor training, consider taking our online course. You can read the course description by [clicking here](#). Or contact us at SCM for more information about Confined Space Rescue training.