

Handbook

Guidelines for safe working in a confined space

HB 213:2003

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Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists
Australian Manufacturing Workers Union
Australian Maritime Safety Authority
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Department of industries and Business, N.T.
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PREFACE

This Handbook was prepared by the Joint Standards Australia/Standards New Zealand Committee SF-037, Work in Confined Spaces.

While preparing AS/NZS 2865:2001, *Safe working in a confined space*, the Committee identified the need to have a companion document to that Standard. This document is intended to provide users with additional information to clarify the intent of the Standard.

The guidelines have used a similar approach to that of the Standard, in that common essential requirements of the Standard are included in boxes. The requirements have been presented in the same order as in the Standard, to simplify reading.

This Handbook is not intended as an alternative to the Standard, but rather to provide additional information, which ought not to be published in a Standard, but which the Committee believes will add greatly to the understanding of what needs to be done to maximize the safety of those who must enter a confined space.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
1 INTRODUCTION	4
2 OBJECTIVE	4
3 APPLICATION.....	4
4 REFERENCED DOCUMENTS.....	4
5 DEFINITION OF A CONFINED SPACE.....	4
6 DESIGN, MANUFACTURE, SUPPLY AND MODIFICATION	6
7 CONSULTATION	8
8 HAZARD IDENTIFICATION.....	8
9 RISK ASSESSMENT	14
10 CONTROL MEASURES	18
11 TRAINING AND COMPETENCE	41
12 EMERGENCY RESPONSE.....	44
13 RECORD KEEPING.....	47

APPENDICES

A LIST OF REFERENCED AND RELATED DOCUMENTS.....	48
B GENERAL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS.....	50
C SAMPLE SCHEDULE OF IDENTIFIED CONFINED SPACES.....	52
D SAMPLE RISK ASSESSMENTS.....	53
E ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CLEANING OF CONFINED SPACES	56
F ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CONDUCT OF HOT WORK IN CONFINED SPACES	58
G ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ATMOSPHERIC MONITORING ...	61
H SAMPLE ACCESS AUTHORITY	64
I ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROVISION AND USE OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE AND SAFETY EQUIPMENT.....	66

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1 INTRODUCTION

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with AS/NZS 2865, *Safe working in a confined space*.

These guidelines provide guidance to designers, manufacturers, suppliers, modifiers of confined spaces, employers and persons who are required to enter or work, or both, in a confined space.

Confined spaces present a special occupational health and safety risk because the hazards which are present may not be readily apparent. Persons from many different occupations and industries may enter confined spaces to perform work-related tasks, unaware that they are entering a potentially hazardous work environment. Many confined spaces have poor natural ventilation and may be of small volume, so that hazardous atmospheres can accumulate quickly. Work in confined spaces can increase the risk of injury or death by having persons work closer to hazards than they would otherwise do, or by creating additional forms of hazard such as engulfment. Many hazards, such as toxic gases and vapours, can also be exacerbated in confined spaces.

The Clauses highlighted in boxes are the requirements from AS/NZS 2865, which were designed to form the basis of regulations under State jurisdictions.

2 OBJECTIVE

The objective of these guidelines is to provide practical guidance to persons on—

- (a) understanding the factors that create a confined space;
- (b) how they may meet the requirements of AS/NZS 2865; and
- (c) applying safe working methods for work in a confined space.

3 APPLICATION

These guidelines are applicable to confined spaces as defined in Clause 5.4 of AS/NZS 2865. These guidelines do not apply to underground mining and tunnelling, nor do they apply to work which is carried out at other than normal atmospheric pressure.

Emergency services are exempt from the requirements to prepare a written risk assessment and written authority for entry, only for the duration of the emergency.

4 REFERENCED DOCUMENTS

A list of referenced documents is given in Appendix A.

5 DEFINITION OF A CONFINED SPACE

5.1 Definition

Clause 5.4 of AS/NZS 2865 defines a confined space as:



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