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1. Purpose:

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure all risks associated with confined spaces within Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) workplaces are identified and managed.

2. Scope:

This procedure applies to all confined spaces which are identified in DEECD workplaces including schools and central and regional offices.

3. References

- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007*
- *Victorian Confined Spaces Compliance Code 2008*
- *Australian Standard 2865:2009 Confined Spaces*

4. Definitions:

Competent Person: A person who has, through a combination of training, education and experience, acquired knowledge and skills enabling that person to perform a specified task correctly.


Confined Space: An enclosed or partially enclosed space if the space:

- (a) Is or is intended to be, or is likely to be entered by any person; and
- (b) Has limited or restricted means for entry or exit that makes it physically difficult for a person to enter or exit the space; and
- (c) Is, or is intended to be, at normal atmospheric pressure while any person is in the space; and
- (d) Contains or is intended to contain-
 - (i) An atmosphere that has a harmful level of any contaminant; or
 - (ii) an atmosphere that does not have a safe oxygen level; or
 - (iii) any stored substance, except liquids, that could cause engulfment.

Examples that may meet the definition for a confined space include storage tanks, silos and other tank-like compartments; open-topped spaces such as pits; pipes, sewers, shafts, ducts and similar structures; that have limited or restricted entry and exit.

Deputy Health and Safety Representative: An elected employee responsible for representing employees within a Designated Work Group (DWG) on matters relating to Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) in the absence of the HSR.

Entry Permit (Confined Space): A permit that provides a formal check to ensure all elements of a safe system of work is in place prior to a person entering a confined space.

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- Hazard:** Anything with the potential to cause harm, injury, illness or loss.
- Health and Safety Representative (HSR):** An elected employee responsible for representing employees within a DWG on matters relating to OHS.
- Lower Explosive Limit (LEL):** The concentration of a flammable contaminant in air below which the propagation of a flame does not occur on contact with an ignition source.
- Management OHS Nominee:** A position nominated by the Workplace Manager to oversee the operational aspects of implementing health, safety and wellbeing initiatives, policies and procedures.
- Risk:** A description of the likelihood and consequence of a hazard causing injury or illness.
- Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS):** A document which describes the high risk work being performed, the health and safety risks associated with the work and the risk control measures that will be applied to ensure the work is carried out in a safe manner.
- Standby Worker/Person:** A competent person who remains outside the confined space to assist in the maintenance of equipment and act as communication if an emergency situation arises.
- Workplace Manager:** The Manager or Principal responsible for the school, central office, regional office or other DEECD workplace.

5. Responsibility:

Workplace Managers and/or Management OHS Nominees are responsible for:

- Identifying confined spaces within the workplace and communicating these to all relevant employees and contractors;
- Consulting HSR and employees in relation to identifying and managing confined space hazards;
- Ensuring risk assessments are conducted for identified confined spaces;
- Ensuring controls are implemented and the **OHS Risk Register** is reviewed; and
- Complying with legislation relating to confined spaces.


HSR:

The functions of the **HSR** can include:

- Reporting confined spaces hazards;
- Assisting in risk assessments;
- Participating in the identification and implementation of risk controls; and
- Reporting on the use and effectiveness of confined space risk control measures.

Employees are responsible for:

- Reporting confined spaces hazards;
- Assisting the Workplace Manager and/or Management OHS Nominee with risk assessments if relevant to their work; and
- Complying with procedures for confined spaces.

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Contractors are responsible for:

- Complying with procedures for confined spaces;
- Providing the DEECD workplace with a Safe Work Method Statement or equivalent before entering a confined space; and
- Complying with Entry Permits for Confined Spaces.

6. Procedure:

6.1 Identify Confined Spaces

The **Workplace Manager and/or Management OHS Nominee** is to identify all potential confined spaces within the workplace in consultation with Facilities, HSR and employees. Site plans and drawings should be reviewed to identify spaces that may potentially be a confined space. The **Workplace Manager and/or Management OHS Nominee** must record the identified confined spaces on the **OHS Risk Register**. All identified confined spaces are to be appropriately signed and barricaded to prevent entry of unauthorised persons. Examples of confined spaces may be found in:

- Pressure vessels, tanks, pipes
- Water/bore wells;
- Sewerage pits, pipes ; and
- Storm water drains.

6.2 Risk Assessment of Confined Spaces

The **Workplace Manager and/or Management OHS Nominee** is to engage a competent person (please contact the OHS Advisory Service on 9692 7756 or the [Regional OHS/WorkSafe Advisor](#)) to conduct a risk assessment for each confined space in the workplace prior to allowing any authorised entry by a competent contractor All risk assessments are to be conducted in consultation with:


- HSR;
- Relevant employees: and
- Relevant standards, codes of practice and legislation.

The risk assessment of confined spaces must include:

- the nature and inherent hazards of the confined space;
- the work required to be done, including the need to enter the confined space;
- the range of methods by which the work can be done;
- the hazards involved and the associated risks involved with the actual work method selected and equipment proposed to be used (refer to the **Confined Space Hazard Guide**);
- emergency response procedures; and
- the competence of persons to undertake the work.

The **OHS Risk Management Procedure** should be referenced when conducting the risk assessment. The completed risk assessments are to be reviewed and revised whenever there is evidence to indicate that they are no longer valid. As a minimum the risk assessment is to be reviewed:

- if there have been any hazards/incidents/injuries reported on **eduSafe** in relation to work in confined spaces;
- where there is a change to a task or a **Safe Work Procedure** either involving or creating a confined space;

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- annually; and
- as a result of changes to the legislation applying to confined spaces.

All initial and revised risk assessments are to be documented as per the **OHS Risk Management Procedure**.

6.3 Controlling Risks Posed by Confined Spaces

6.3.1 Signage

All confined spaces must be identified by displaying a sign at the entry to the space. The sign must include that a confined space permit to work is required for entry. The **Workplace Manager and/or Management OHS Nominee** must make sure that all signage within the workplace is communicated and implemented as per the **Consultation and Communication Procedure**.

6.3.2 Entry Permit

No DEECD employee should enter a confined space at any time.

If the confined space is required to be entered a competent contractor is to be engaged. The **Workplace Manager and/or Management OHS Nominee** is to request of the contractor who is in direct control of the confined space to supply a **Safe Work Method Statement** in addition to completing an entry permit. The **contractor** must be a competent person to be nominated as being in control of a confined space (see **Contractor Management Procedure**).

On completion of work, the **Workplace Manager and/or Management OHS Nominee** or the **contractor** deemed as being in direct control of the work in the confined space is to acknowledge in writing that the work has been completed and all persons involved in the work have left the confined space and have been accounted for. This is to be documented on the **Entry Permit (Confined Space)**.


6.3.3 Other Control Measures

Where confined spaces are identified, controls must be established and implemented. As a minimum there must be signage and physical barriers such as locks or gatic (access) covers to prevent unauthorised entry and all listed control measures in the **Entry Permit (Confined Space)** Confined Space must be followed. These controls must be established and implemented by the **contractor** deemed as being in direct control of the work **or the Workplace Manager and/or Management OHS nominee** in consultation with the HSR and employees. This is to be documented on the **OHS Risk Register**.

When determining additional controls to reduce risk associated with confined spaces, the **Workplace Manager and/or Management OHS Nominee** must follow the hierarchy of control outlined in **OHS Risk Management Procedure**. Examples of effective confined spaces controls (from most to least effective) could include:

- Eliminating confined spaces i.e. removing disused storage tanks;
- Erect barriers to prevent unauthorised entry;
- Improving ventilation and exits in confined spaces; and
- Providing PPE e.g. breathing apparatus.

6.4 Prior to Entry to Confined Space

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Refer to **Entry Permit (Confined Spaces)** in conjunction with this section.

The **Workplace Manager and/or Management OHS Nominee** are to ensure that all hazardous services normally connected to the confined space are isolated or otherwise controlled so as to prevent:

- the introduction of any materials, contaminants, agents or conditions that may be harmful to a person occupying the space, and
- the activation or energising in any way of equipment or services that may pose a risk to the health and safety of a person inside a confined space.

The **Workplace Manager and/or Management OHS Nominee** must ensure that, if appropriate, a confined space is cleared of all contaminants by use of a suitable purging agent (where by contaminants are displaced from the confined space before entry to a confined space). For purging purposes, the **engaged contractor** must ensure that pure oxygen or a gas mixture in a concentration of more than 21% oxygen by volume is not used. The **engaged contractor** should confirm the above on the **Entry Permit (Confined Spaces)**.

The **Workplace Manager and/or Management OHS Nominee** is to ensure that no person enters a confined space unless:

- the confined space contains and maintains a safe oxygen level;
- any atmospheric contaminants are reduced and remain below the appropriate exposure standards (see **Hygiene Management Procedure**);
- the confined space is free from extremes of temperature; and
- the concentration of any flammable contaminant in the confined space atmosphere is and remains below 5% of its LEL.

The **engaged contractor** should confirm the above on the **Entry Permit (Confined Spaces)**.

Whilst work is being carried out in or on the confined space, the person responsible for direct control of the work is to ensure that one or more competent stand-by persons are present outside the confined space.


The stand-by person/s must be assessed as being a competent person and must remain on the outside of and in close proximity to the confined space entry and must be capable of being in continuous communication, and where possible able to maintain visual contact, with persons within the confined space.

The stand-by person/s must be capable of operating monitoring equipment used to ensure the safety of the atmosphere within the confined space as well as initiating emergency procedures where required.

6.5 Reviewing Controls

The **Workplace Manager and/or Management OHS Nominee** is responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of hazard controls in consultation with HSR and relevant employees. This review is to be documented on the **OHS Risk Register**.

If the control is deemed inadequate, another risk assessment is to be completed with the view to establishing more appropriate controls.

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6.6 OHS Risk Register

The **Workplace Manager and/or Management OHS Nominee** is to make sure that the **OHS Risk Register** is kept up to date and is reviewed when confined spaces are identified, assessed, controlled and reviewed.

7. Related Documentation:

OHS Risk Register
OHS Risk Management Procedure
Consultation and Communication Procedure
Entry Permit (Confined Space)
Contractor Management Procedure
Induction and Training Procedure
Safe Work Procedure Template
Hygiene Management Procedure
eduSafe
DEECD Hazard Guide – Confined Spaces

8. Version Control

Version	Section Amended	Amendment	Date Created	Author
2	All	Included Confined Space Entry Permit and SWMS definition and updated procedure to reflect changes in the Contractor Management Procedure	February 2011	EHU
3	All	Two yearly review as per OHSMS requirements. Removal of training section as no employees should be entering a confined space and therefore will not need training in regards to entering a confined space.	April 2011	EHU