

Pumpers Working Construction Sites Must Follow New OSHA Confined Space Rule

- Appeared in print as *"Pumpers Working Construction Sites Must Follow New OSHA Confined Space Rule"*
- By **Doug Day**
- [August 2015](#)

Workers in the construction industry now have the same confined space protections that those in manufacturing and general industry have had for more than 20 years. A new rule, effective Aug. 3, incorporates most of the general industry rule and includes several provisions specific to construction hazards.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations for the construction industry used to have just a training requirement; employees working in confined spaces had to be instructed about the hazards, necessary precautions and the use of protective emergency equipment. The new rule has five key new requirements, according to information published by OSHA:

- Detailed provisions on coordinating activities when there are multiple employers at the work site to ensure hazards are not introduced into a confined space by workers performing tasks outside the space (for example, a generator running near the entrance of a confined space causing a buildup of carbon monoxide).
- A competent person must evaluate the work site and identify confined spaces, including permit spaces (those that may have a hazardous atmosphere, engulfment hazard or other serious hazard that can interfere with a worker's ability to leave the space without assistance).
- Continuous atmospheric monitoring whenever possible.
- Continuous monitoring of engulfment hazards. For example, when workers are performing work in a storm sewer, a storm upstream could cause flash flooding. An electronic sensor or observer posted upstream could alert workers at the first sign of the hazard.
- Allowance for the suspension of a permit, instead of cancellation, in the event of changes from the entry conditions list on the permit or an unexpected event requiring evacuation of the space. The space must be returned to the entry conditions listed on the permit before re-entry. Three other provisions of the new rule clarify existing requirements in the general industry standard:

- Employers who direct workers to enter a space without using a complete permit system must prevent workers' exposure to physical hazards through elimination of the hazard or isolation methods such as lockout/tagout.
- Employers relying on the aid of local emergency services must arrange for responders to give the employer advance notice if they will be unable to respond for a period of time.
- Employers must provide training in a language and vocabulary that the worker understands.

OSHA's online FAQ says companies that work in both construction and general industry will meet OSHA's requirements by following the new construction rule (Subpart AA of 29 CFR 1926). Employers should review the agency's website (www.osha.gov/confinedspaces/index.html) for more specific information on how the rule may impact them.

Work on the new rule began in 1994 when OSHA agreed to establish regulations specific to the construction industry when it settled a lawsuit concerning the general industry rule. OSHA estimates the rule will prevent 780 serious injuries and save the lives of five construction workers annually.