Confined Spaces on the Farm Meeting Kit

DEFINING FEATURES OF CONFINED SPACES

- The space is enclosed or partially enclosed.
- The space is not designed or intended for continuous human occupancy.
- The space has limited or restricted means of entry or exit that may complicate the provision of first aid, evacuation, rescue or other emergency response services.
- The space is large enough and configured in a way that a worker could enter to perform assigned work.

CONFINED SPACE HAZARDS ON THE FARM

- Grain and feed storage facilities
- Corrugated steel bins
- Silos
- Sumps, tunnels, and pump pits
- Forage storage
- Manure storage tanks
- Manure transport vehicles
- Bulk transport vehicles
- Sprayer and chemical transport vehicles
- Forage and silage dump wagons
- Feed grinders/mixers
- Feed mixer wagons tanks
- Storage and mixing tanks, bins, and silos
- Bulk liquid storage tanks
- Containment areas around diked storage tanks
- Wells, cisterns, dry wells, septic tanks
- Grain driers
- Fuel storage tanks

DETERMINING WHETHER A SPACE IS A CONFINED SPACE – RECOGNITION

Once you have determined the confined spaces at your farm, you must identify the associated hazards.

- Evaluate all confined spaces to determine if they contain any actual or potential hazards.
- Train workers to never enter a confined space before the hazards have been identified and steps have been taken to mitigate those hazards.

- Ensure workers review, understand, and follow the written procedures before entering confined spaces and know how and when to exit. Ensure there is a safe means to enter and exit the space.
- Consider chemical reactions that could occur based on the materials in the confined spaces, and potential byproducts that could create a hazardous atmosphere.
- Ensure air sampling is conducted prior to anyone entering the space.
- Ensure that sampling equipment can measure potential by products.
- Use an appropriate routine and simple detection approach. A 4-gas meter will only detect oxygen deficiency and three additional hazards (usually flammability, carbon monoxide, and hydrogen sulfide). Detector tubes or a simple hand-held meter such as a photoionization detector may also be needed.
- Ensure confined spaces are properly ventilated.
- Ensure that workers entering confined spaces maintain contact at all times with a trained attendant either visually, by phone, or by two-way radio.
- Use appropriate equipment (fall protection, rescue, air monitoring, lighting, and communication) according to entry procedures.
- Develop an emergency action plan that includes quick removal of the entrant and procedures for facility operators and local responders.
- Wear proper equipment: Use the correct respirator and make sure all equipment is tested and grounded.
- Follow lock-out procedures to avoid accidental start-up of equipment, and disconnect and cap all input lines.
- Have at least one trained and equipped coworker standing by in case there’s trouble. Decide ahead of time how to communicate.
- Use spark-proof tools, lights, and fans.
- A harness and attached lifeline is key for performing a rescue. Simply putting a rope around the waist isn’t enough.
- If a worker must be rescued, never go in after them unless another trained and equipped worker is there. Have trained rescuers on standby.

FINAL WORD

The safest approach for preventing injuries in confined spaces is to simply perform all work from outside of the confined space when possible.