

Confined Spaces Policy

The Confined Spaces Regulations 1997 are relevant to all activities carried out on the University campus entry is required into any place, including any chamber, tank, vat, silo, pit, trench, pipe, sewer, flue, well or other similar space, which, by virtue of its enclosed nature, poses a risk from fire or explosion; the loss of consciousness arising from an increase in body temperature; the loss of consciousness or asphyxiation arising from gas, fume, vapour or the lack of oxygen; drowning arising from an increase in the level of liquid; or asphyxiation arising from the presence of a free flowing solid.

Under these Regulations a 'confined space' must have both of the following defining features: it must be a space which is substantially (though not always entirely) enclosed and one or more of the 'specified risks' must be present or reasonably foreseeable. Specified risks include:

- Flammable substances and oxygen enrichment
- Excessive heat
- Toxic gas, fume or vapour can lead to asphyxia or unconsciousness.
- Oxygen deficiency
- Ingress or presence of liquids
- Free-flowing solids which can submerge a person, preventing breathing.
- Risk of structural collapse which could entrap a person

This Policy applies to and within all spaces across the University's campuses, including Gibbet Hill, Westwood and Wellesbourne. The Policy also applies to all activities managed by the University at off-campus accommodation properties. This Policy is supported by arrangements, instructions, and guidance on the management of Confined Spaces, which are available on the University's Health and Safety web pages.

Under the provisions of Regulation 26, Safety Regulations and associated University Health and Safety Policy document, it is the duty of all staff, students and others working in the University to comply with this Policy, together with any other instructions, rules and guidance that may apply.

Core Principles

1. General risk assessments must identify any spaces which might be considered to meet the criteria outlined above, and such spaces must be identified and signed as being 'Confined Spaces'.
2. Where there are identified confined spaces a 'Permit to Work' system must be deployed to control particularly high-risk activities, and 'Access Permits' used to control access to particularly high risk areas: where the space in question is part of the Estate (part of a building or a component fixed to or within a building) this should be managed through the Permits Office, and where the space is part of a piece of free-standing equipment or system not connected to a building this should be managed through local, departmental arrangements.
3. Priority must be given to avoiding work in confined spaces, but, if it is not reasonably practicable to carry out the work without entering the confined space, then a safe system for working within the confined space must be devised and implemented: a Permit to Work system should be used to ensure control measures are robust.

4. Where the need to enter cannot be avoided steps must be taken to reduce the duration of such entry and to ensure that suitable means of escape and /or rescue are in place, and that associate emergency arrangements are documented with the control measures.
5. Control measures must document the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (including any harenesses, atmospheric monitoring devices and Breathing Apparatus) which might be required for those entering the space and also for the rescue team(s).
6. Risk assessments must include the assessment of substances which might be present within the space and what might come into the space whilst work is underway.
7. Entry into such spaces must be managed by a nominated Authorised person, who is resoponsible for the supervision of the process and the associated Permit to Work: such individuals must be formally signed off as being competent to manage such activities.
8. Those people entering such spaces and those who form rescue teams must also be appropriately trained and signed off as being competent to carry out such activities.

Responsibilities

Heads of Departments are responsible for the implementation of this Policy with regard to identifying, through general risk assessment, any potential confined spaces within their respective departments and for ensuring that the Estates department are informed of all such spaces which are part of the Estate. For confined spaces which are not part of the Estate (associated with work equipment used for research for example) the Heads of Department are responsible for ensuring that appropriate controls are put in place, through the use of local Permits to Work, to minimise the risk to staff, contractors, students and visitors. Heads of Department are also responsible for ensuring that access to such spaces is controlled.

The Director of Estates is responsible for identifying and maintaining records of all spaces within the Estate which are deemed to be confined spaces and for providing a Permit to Work system and access control systems to ensure the safety of individuals, and particularly the safety of those Estates staff and contractors required to enter such spaces.

All staff within departments must comply with this Policy and the associated arrangements, instructions and guidance.

The Director of Health and Safety is responsible for advising on the standards and regulations that must be achieved in order to meet legal requirements; for keeping the University's Health and Safety website up to date with the related policy documents; and for ensuring that spot checks and audits are carried out to provide assurance that activities are being carried out in compliance with this Policy.

Review

This policy will be reviewed when any legal requirements change or at least once every three years.

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