



WHAT IS A CONFINED SPACE?



The new Confined Space Regulations (O.Reg. 632/05) came into effect on September 30, 2006 and regulates all workplaces under the Occupational Health & Safety Act (OHSA), with a few exceptions to underwater and specific work, as described in the O.Reg 632/05. The employer is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of OHSA and its regulations are complied with in the workplace.

A “confined space” means

(a) a fully or partially enclosed space,

(b) That is not both designed and constructed for continuous human occupancy, and

(c) In which atmospheric hazards may occur because of its construction, location or contents or because of work that is done in it.

All three conditions must apply for confined space to be determined. The employer must determine through evaluation whether any space meets the definition of a “confined space”. The decision tree given below and the specific sections in the O.Reg 632/05 can be used as a process to determine confined space.



Note: A confined space is different from restricted space, and so careful evaluation is required by the employer to distinguish if it is a confined space, or restricted space or both.

So, what is meant by “not both designed and constructed for continuous human occupancy”?
Some examples are:

- Storage tanks, boilers, pressure vessels, vats, bins and other tank-like compartments usually having only a manhole for entry
- Open-topped spaces more than 1.2 m deep, such a pump well, pit or degreaser
- Pipes, sewers ducts and similar structures
- Cargo tanks, cellular double-bottom tanks, and oil tanks and void spaces
- Flues, chimneys, ovens or furnaces
- Elevator rooms
- Mechanical rooms

If atmospheric hazards are present in these spaces, then the space would be classified as a confined space. An atmospheric hazard may occur in the confined space because of the work being done in the space, the materials stored in the space, the structure of the space, and the location of the space.

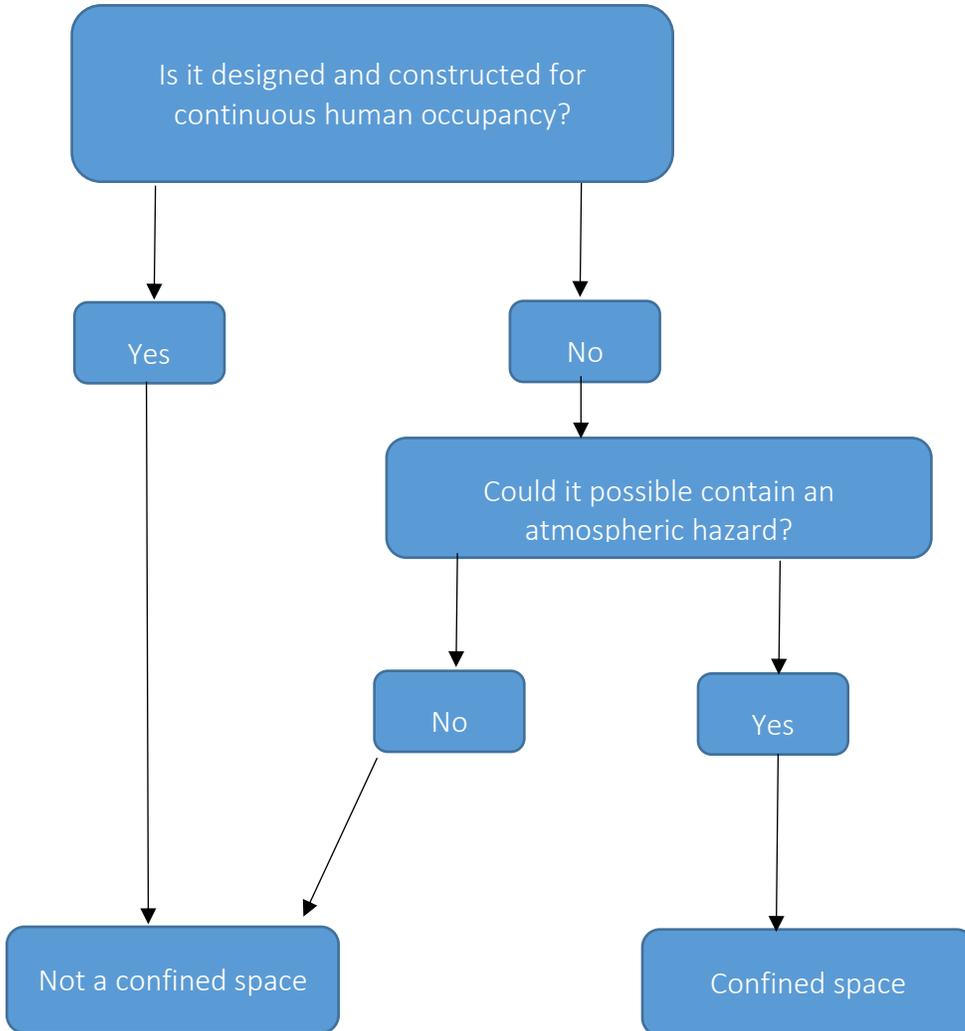
WHAT IS AN “ATMOSPHERIC HAZARD”?

An atmospheric hazard is defined as,

- a) The accumulation of flammable, combustible or explosive agents.
- b) The oxygen content in the atmosphere that is less than 19.5 per cent or more than 23 per cent by volume
- c) The accumulation of atmospheric contaminants, including gases, vapours, fumes, dusts or mists, that in crawl spaces near a compressor in a mechanical room could,
 - i. result in acute health effects that pose an immediate threat to life
 - ii. interfere with a person’s ability to escape unaided from a confined space



DECISION TREE



RESOURCES:

O.Reg. 632/05 Confined Space: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/050632>

Confined Space (Ministry of Labour): https://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pubs/confined/cs_4.php