

Confined spaces can kill:

The management of this risk on commercial and fishing ships.

Purpose

The purpose of this bulletin is to remind shipowners, masters, crews, accredited persons and marine safety officers of the hazards found onboard ships in particular the high risk associated with confined spaces and the importance of using appropriate procedures to provide for safe entry.

Background

Failure to adopt a systematic and careful approach to confined space entry can result in injury and death. Multiple fatalities have occurred in confined spaces especially when rescuers fail to assess the risk and take appropriate steps.

Confined space hazards are not confined to toxic or oxygen depleted atmospheres. There are many different kinds of confined spaces on board ships such as sealed void spaces, fuel tanks, sillage tanks, battery storage compartments, and compartments where explosive gases may accumulate due to construction work. There have been circumstances where workers or contractors have risked serious injury as a result of not having equipment isolated when working in a confined space.

The level of risk will vary considerably depending on the nature of the space, the material contained within the space and the hazard control arrangements. As a consequence the procedures and precautions required will depend on the nature of the space and the level of the hazard present.

Requirements

Ship operators have a safety obligation under part 4 of the *Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994* and part 3 of the *Queensland Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* to ensure that procedures for confined space entry are implemented and adherence to the procedures is monitored.

Appropriate training is required to ensure that all ship's staff involved in confined space entry are aware of the procedures and have sufficient knowledge to assess the risks and apply measures to minimise risks associated with confined space entry.

Confined space entry procedures should be part of ship's Safety Management System (SMS). *Australian/New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 2865 – 'Confined Space Entry'* defines confined spaces and outlines risk assessment and entry permit requirements.

Guidance on developing safe procedures for confined space entry can be obtained from this standard. Identification, assessment and controlling the risks associated with confined space are important steps in minimising risks that can occur during confined space entry.

Procedures for confined space entry should be reviewed periodically and crew members should be appropriately trained.

All void spaces must be identified by internationally recognized signage such as the *Australian Standard AS 1319 Safety Signs for the Occupational Environment* or other recognized national or International standard.

Persons having a safety obligation onboard ships should also consider other risks associated with the operation of the ship and take appropriate action. *Australian/New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 4360 'Risk Management'* describes a formal process for establishing a systematic risk management program.

Ship owners, masters, crews and accredited persons should recognise risk management as an integral part of good ship management practice. Risk management is the term applied to a logical and systematic method of establishing the context,

identifying, analyzing, evaluating, treating, monitoring and communicating risks associated with an activity.

Risk management is as much about identifying opportunities as avoiding or mitigating losses. To manage risk properly, appropriate documentation is required. This will need to be sufficient to satisfy an audit by Department of Transport and Main Roads officers or other persons.

References

Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994
Queensland Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995
AS/NZS 4360 'Risk Management'
AS/NZS 2865 'Safe Working in a Confined Space'
AS 1319 'Safety Signs for the Occupational Environment'
Australian Maritime Safety Authority, *'The Code of Safe Working Practice for Australian Seafarers'*

Queensland Workplace Health and Safety provide detailed brochures relating to the dangers of confined spaces such as, *'Working in Confined Spaces'* and *'A Quick Guide to Working Safely in Confined Spaces'*. These brochures are available on the internet at www.whs.qld.gov.au/subject/space.htm.

Brochures are also available relating to the reduction of risk in the workplace. These may be obtained by visiting a Workplace Health and Safety office, by telephoning 1300 369 915 or by visiting the website above.

Contact information

If you require further information about this Marine Information Bulletin, contact (07) 3120 7341 or msgmail@msq.qld.gov.au.

Other Marine Information Bulletins covering various topics relating to the safe operation of ships may be obtained from Maritime Safety Queensland's website at www.msq.qld.gov.au and from the following Maritime Safety Queensland regional offices.

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