

Permit-required Confined Spaces and Emergency Responders

OSHA recently developed a standard for confined spaces in the construction industry ([29 CFR 1926 Subpart AA](#)). These spaces can present conditions that are immediately dangerous to your workers' lives or health if not properly identified, evaluated, tested and controlled. As a result, preparing to respond to an accident in a confined space is just as important as training workers to enter them.

One provision of the standard requires employers to develop and implement procedures for summoning rescue and emergency services in permit-required confined spaces. Any employer who relies on local emergency services for assistance is required to meet [the applicable requirements of the OSHA standard](#).

However, not all rescue services or emergency responders are trained or equipped to conduct rescues in confined spaces. When you identify an off-site rescue service, it is critical that the rescuers can protect your employees. The emergency services should be familiar with the exact site location, the types of permit-required confined spaces and the necessary rescue equipment.

Employer Considerations

Pre-planning for a rescue will ensure that the emergency service is capable, available and prepared to save your workers.

Before the start of any rescue operation, you must evaluate prospective emergency responders, and select one that has the following traits:

- Adequate equipment for rescues, such as the following:
 - Atmospheric monitors
 - Fall protection
 - Extraction equipment
 - Self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) for the particular permit-required confined space
- The ability to respond and conduct a rescue in a timely manner based on the site conditions, and the capability to conduct a rescue if faced with potential hazards specific to the space. These hazards may include the following:
 - Atmospheric hazards
 - Electrocutation
 - Flooding or engulfment
 - Poor lighting
 - Falls
 - Chemical hazards
- The ability to notify you in the event that the rescue team becomes unavailable.

To ensure the safety of your workers, you must take a proactive role in securing the services of emergency responders. This includes finding the most efficient way of contacting emergency responders, conducting a tour of the project site with them and communicating any changes made to the site before a rescue becomes necessary.

Communicating with Emergency Responders

Provided by CMR Risk and Insurance Services

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Talking with emergency responders about the hazards they might encounter during a rescue will assist in preparing for the situation. The following are some questions responders should be able to answer when you request their services:

- Are you able to respond and conduct a rescue in a timely manner based on the site conditions?
- Do you have the appropriate equipment for response and rescue?
- Are you prepared for the hazards identified at the project site?
- Are you aware of the **exact** location of the work site? This includes information on access routes, gates, site plans and GPS coordinates.
- Can you visit the site and hold a practice rescue?
- What is the best way to contact you? How would I communicate any changes to site conditions throughout the project?
- Could other emergencies or group training preclude you from responding, and how will that be communicated?

Source: OSHA