**CONFINED SPACES TOOLBOX TALK CONTENT**

Every year there are a number of fatal and serious accidents when workers enter confined spaces such as live sewers, manholes, bored piles, trenches, tanks poorly ventilated rooms and so on without the necessary tests being carried out or the correct safety rescue equipment being provided. They are very quickly overcome by an atmosphere that doesn’t have enough oxygen to support life. Alternatively the processes they carry out, e.g. welding, uses up the oxygen in the air faster than any natural ventilation can replace it.

Many of these accidents would have been avoided if supervising staff and operators had been properly trained and the work carried out to a Permit-to-Work system. People engaged on such operations must be physically and mentally suitable and properly trained for the job.

There must also be arrangements in place to deal with the situation when things go wrong; including arrangements for the safe rescue of anyone in difficulty.

You must never enter a confined space (such as a trench, manhole, tank, bored pile, foul sewer etc.) without specific instruction from your Supervisor/Line Manager.

The precautions that you can expect to see will vary depending on the work itself. They are likely to will include:-

* Preventing or controlling dangerous atmospheres which could arise when there is a lack of oxygen or when toxic or flammable gases are present.
* Equipment for testing the atmosphere before entry and at regular intervals being provided and used by a competent person. No one should enter the confined space until they are satisfied that entry is safe. Testing should continue while you are working inside, and you must leave immediately if told to do so.
* Powered fresh air ventilation may be provided in some circumstances.
* All necessary safety and rescue equipment being available on site at the actual location of the work.
* Training of site workers in the use of the safety and rescue equipment by a competent person.
* Using the protective clothing provided by all workers and others involved.

No one should ever eat, drink or smoke whilst in a confined space. The designated room should be used after protective clothing has been removed and you have washed your face and hands.

If you have to work in any sewer or foul drain or open water course make sure you have been given a Weil’s Disease (Leptospirosis) card which can be shown to your doctor should you fall ill during or shortly after such work. Weil’s disease is linked to exposure to rats’ urine which is why the use of protective clothing and hand washing is so important when working anywhere near places where rats may be present.