

According to 29 CFR 1910.146, what are the procedural options for permit confined spaces?

Once the environment has been identified as a permit space that contains at least one additional serious safety hazard, the next question is what to do about it. There is more than one option.

1. Permanently eliminate the need for entry

In some cases, the employer may elect to permanently secure the space to prevent entries. Since the space is no longer subject to entry, there is no need to develop procedures governing entry into the space. Another common approach is to relocate valves and controls outside, rather than inside of confined spaces.

2. Implement engineering controls that permanently eliminate or control the dangerous condition(s)

A confined space is not designed for continuous worker occupancy. If the hazardous conditions in the space are permanently eliminated or controlled, and the space has been rendered safe for continuous occupancy, it no longer meets the basic definition of a confined space. It is simply a non-hazardous enclosed space where work is performed.

For instance, a continuous gas detection and ventilation system might be used to ensure that an enclosed space is safe for continuous occupancy by workers. The system is designed such that a fault in the ventilation system, or the presence of gas, triggers an alarm that allows workers to safely leave the area before conditions become hazardous.