



Physics Division ESH Bulletin 00-3

CONFINED SPACES

You may not be aware of changes in the ORNL (and OSHA) Confined Space Program.

The definition of a Confined Space has changed. A Confined Space is a space with potential or known hazards AND the space has a size and shape large enough for a person to enter, has limited entrances and exits, and is not designed for people to work in continuously.

In the past, the Tandem Accelerator in Building 6000 was not classified as a Confined Space because it was designed for people to work in when the SF₆ gas is in storage. When OSHA added the stipulation that the space must be designed for *continuous* human occupancy to avoid being classified as a Confined Space, the Tandem became a Confined Space. At the present time, the ORNL Safety Department has agreed that a Confined Space permit is only needed for the *initial entry* into the Tandem when we have a tank opening. After the initial entry using a Confined Space permit, the Tandem can be downgraded to a non-permit required Confined Space.

At one time, potential Confined Spaces were classified as either (1) enclosed spaces, (2) low-hazard Confined Spaces, or (3) high-hazard Confined Spaces. That system of classification has changed. The new system eliminates the term "enclosed spaces" altogether. Now, Confined Spaces are classified as either permit-required Confined Spaces or non-permit required Confined Spaces. Permit-required Confined Spaces must use a Confined Space work permit (see ORNL-SH-P24). Non-permit required Confined Spaces must use either documented Job Hazard Evaluation or a standard operating procedure. When a permit-required space has been changed to a non-permit-required space due to the elimination of all hazards, the basis of the downgrade must be documented on the Confined Space permit. Note that when the Tandem is downgraded to a non-permit required Confined Space, entry is strictly controlled through HRIBF procedures.

All permit-required Confined Spaces must be tested for oxygen, flammability, and toxic gases using calibrated instruments before they can be entered. In permit-required Confined Spaces, forced air ventilated spaces must also be periodically tested to verify that hazardous compounds are being sufficiently removed. We have an agreement with the ORNL Safety Department that allows us to do our own oxygen testing prior to initial entry into the Tandem. We do not have to conduct testing for flammability and toxic gases since these hazards are not present. All other permit-required Confined Space entries in Physics Division facilities must have all testing done and ONLY ORNL Safety personnel must conduct this testing.

For further information, contact Charles C. Phillips, ORNL Confined Space Program Manager (576-5048) or Sandra Kennedy, Physics Division ESH Officer (576-0240).