Maritime & Coastguard Agency

Identifying enclosed spaces and the precautions to take when entering

Use this guide to help you identify enclosed spaces, and to understand the precautions to take when entering an enclosed space.

1. Identify an enclosed space

Enclosed spaces are not always obvious.

An enclosed space means a space which is not designed for continuous worker occupancy and has either or both of the following characteristics:

a Limited openings for entry and exit.

b Inadequate ventilation.

Some spaces such as paint and chemical lockers, CO_2 rooms and battery lockers can be entered through weathertight or shipboard doors – but these spaces should still be considered dangerous.

A space may seem safe, and the tests may indicate that it is safe at first, but if it is connected to an enclosed space, the hazardous gases can migrate, making the space dangerous.

Warning! Do not enter an enclosed space without following proper precautions, even in an emergency.

Images: *Maritime Craft Services.*

2.

Write down your enclosed spaces here

Do they all have hazardous warning signage? ☐

Do you need a permit to enter? Carry out risk assessments and familiarise yourself with the regulations. ☐

Are they secured (e.g. does a door or hatch prevent entry)? ☐

3.

Carry out risk assessments and familiarise yourself with guidance

Familiarise yourself with the advice provided in the *Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seafarers* (COSWP). This is a sound basis for establishing company procedure for entry into enclosed spaces.

You must carry out a risk assessment and issue a permit to work.

Images: *Makims Kazakovs*

4. Precautions to take when entering an enclosed space

No enclosed space should be entered into without following proper precautions:

Can the task be carried out without entering an enclosed space?

Yes → ✗ **Do not enter**

No

✓ Appoint a responsible officer to authorise entry and supervise the task.
✓ Appoint a competent person to assess the space.

✓ Carry out task-based risk assessment to consider the following:

Assessment of the space:

- Is ventilation limited?
- Does it have limited entrances and exits?
- Is it designed for continuous occupancy?
- What factors could affect the atmosphere in the space?
- How else can the space be dangerous?

Identify equipment needed and competence to complete the task safely:

- Do you have atmosphere testing equipment available in good working order, and calibrated as required? → **No** → ✗ **Do not enter**
- Do you have rescue equipment ready? → **No** → ✗ **Do not enter**
- Can the time spent working in the space be reduced?
- Can the task be deferred to a safer time, e.g. better weather/ sea conditions, when ship is alongside?

Consider the impact of other work being conducted on board, weather, sea conditions etc.

- Do you have suitable tools and equipment? → **No** → ✗ **Do not enter**
- Arrange communication between those working in the space, those supervising, and bridge and engine room (as appropriate)
- Identify personal protective equipment required
- Do the above factors prevent procedures from being followed? → **Yes** → ✗ **Do not enter**

✓ **Appoint** competent persons to carry out the task. Ensure they understand the risk assessment and safety measures in place.

✓ **Arrange** permit to work, ensure a rescue plan and rescue and resuscitation equipment is in place. Check communications are effective.

✓ **Appoint** attendant to stand at entrance of space in case emergency rescue is needed.

✓ **Isolate** pipe entry and exits, agitators and electrics if needed
Ventilate and secure the space.

✓ **Test the atmosphere –** is it within safe limits?

No

✗ Do not enter

Establish the cause.
Do not enter until it has been made safe.

Yes

✓ **Agree procedures** for preparation and entry.

✓ **Keep testing** the atmosphere.

✓ **Keep reviewing** the risks while working.

✓ **When finished:** leave the space, secure, remove isolations and sign off permit to work.

✓ **Review risk assessment** and update if needed.

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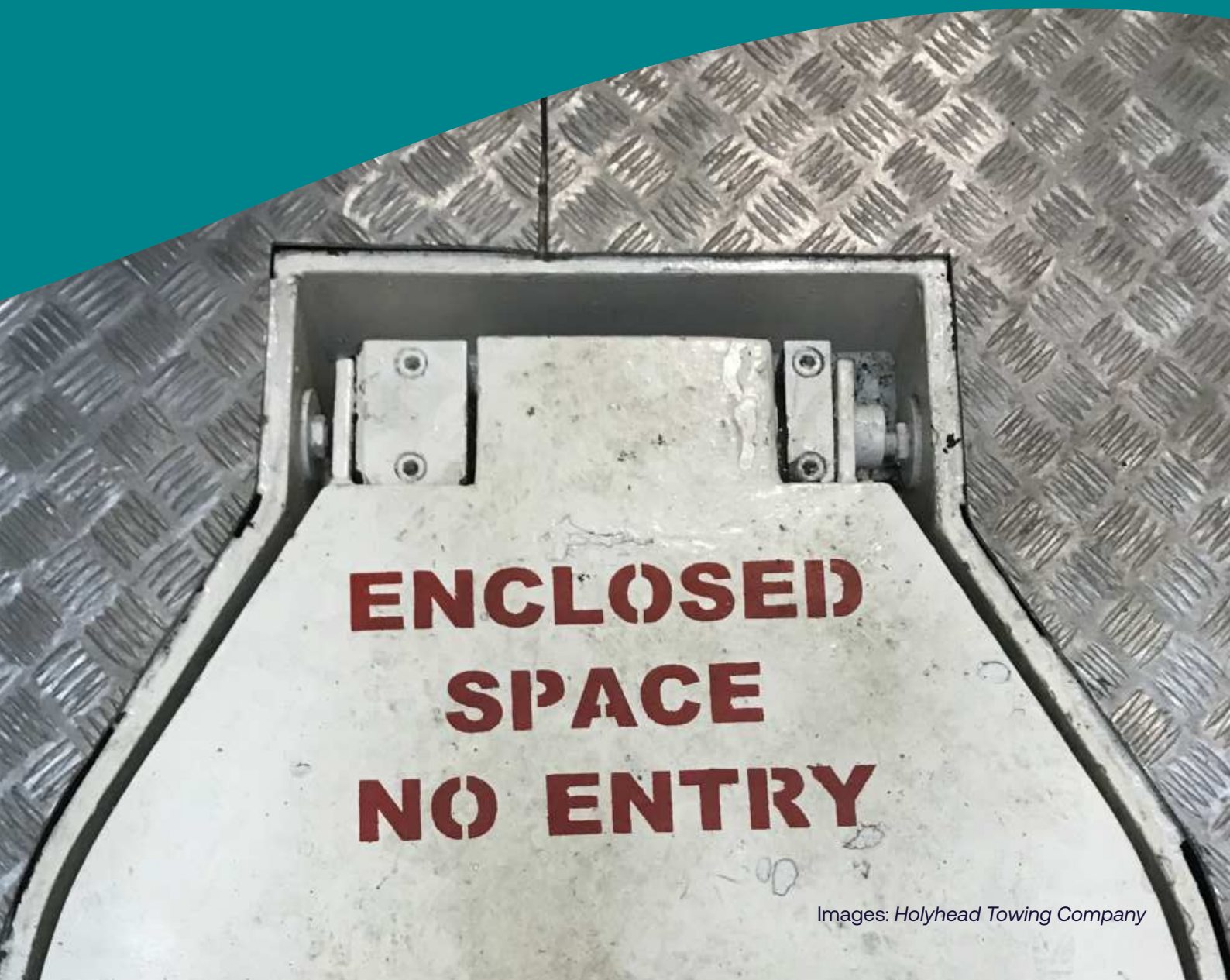
Remember:

If you see someone lying motionless **Do not rush** to carry out a rescue by yourself.

Stop, think – why are they unconscious, could this be an enclosed space?

Should an emergency occur, the general (or crew) alarm should be sounded so that back-up is immediately available to the rescue team.

Under no circumstances should the attendant enter the space before help has arrived and the situation has been evaluated to ensure the safety of those entering the space.



Images: *Holyhead Towing Company*