Are Excavations/Trenches Considered Confined Spaces? — Ask The Expert



Question

Do you know if a trench is definitely considered a confined space in BC'

Answer

It depends.

Explanation

The OHS Reg. definition of 'confined spaces' in Sec. 9.1 lists characteristics but not specific examples. However, the <u>WorkSafeBC Guidelines</u> specify that an 'excavation' is NOT a confined space if ALL of the following criteria are met:

- 1. The design, construction, location, and intended use of these spaces will ensure these spaces are characterized by clean respirable air at all times.
- 2. The space must have an interior volume of not less than 64 cubic feet per occupant.
- 3. The space must have openings to the atmosphere that are known to provide natural ventilation.
- 4. There must be no potential for a high or moderate hazard atmosphere, as defined in section 9.1 of the Regulation,

- to exist or develop immediately prior to any worker entering the space or during any work within the space.
- 5. There must not be a need to mechanically ventilate, clean, purge, or inert the space prior to entry for any reason.
- 6. There must be no potential for a hazardous substance to migrate through any media (e.g., air, soil, conveyance, piping, or structure) to infiltrate the space.
- 7. The space must be free of residual material (e.g., waste, sludge, debris) that if disturbed could generate air contaminants that could immediately and acutely affect a worker's health.
- 8. There must not be any risk of entrapment or engulfment to workers entering the space.
- 9. The space must not contain, have introduced, or be adjacent to tools, equipment, or involve processes that could generate air contaminants that could immediately and acutely affect a worker's health