

Recent Tragedy Reaffirms the Dangers of Confined Spaces to Would-Be Rescuers



It's not news to safety professionals that confined spaces are hazardous to not only those workers who must do some job in them but also would-be rescuers who try to come to the aid of co-workers in trouble in such spaces. In fact, some have estimated that **60%** of the workers killed in confined spaces were attempted rescuers.

But when a co-worker is in trouble in a silo, tank, sewer, etc., others may disregard their training and rush in with the best of intentions and unfortunately end up victims themselves.

When a utility worker saw that a section of a paved street wasn't settling properly, he removed a manhole cover and climbed into the hole. But after the 15-foot-deep opening went silent, a co-worker climbed into the drainage hole to rescue him. When he, too, stopped responding, a third worker entered the same hole.

All three workers died after being overcome by toxic created by rotted vegetation. A firefighter who also tried to save the men became unconscious within seconds. He's currently in the hospital and in critical condition.

A fourth utility worker was treated at the scene. And three sheriff's deputies who were exposed to fumes were taken to the

hospital for treatment.

None of the men who entered the manhole wore masks or carried respirators that could've saved their lives.

A Miami-Dade County hazmat team performed tests at the scene and found that there was both methane gas and hydrogen sulfide gas coupled with low levels of oxygen in the pipe. OSHA is investigating the workers' deaths.

The [OHSInsider.com](https://www.ohsinsider.com) can help you protect workers' and would-be rescuers' in confined spaces with many resources, articles and tools, including:

- A [confined spaces infographic](#) to display in your workplace.