Confined Space Procedure

1. Purpose

The WA Country Health Service (WACHS) is committed to providing and maintaining a safe work environment. Under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2020* (WA) (WHS Act), WACHS has a primary duty of care to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, for the health and safety of workers (while those workers are at work), as well as to ensure that other persons are not put at risk from work carried out as part of WACHS's business or undertaking.

The purpose of this procedure is to mitigate the risk of personal injury or death of workers conducting work in confined spaces resulting from a lack of oxygen, harmful airborne contaminants or a flammable atmosphere within the confined space.

This procedure outlines the process to be applied to ensure all workers maintain a safe working environment and must be followed when a person's head or upper body is in a confined space or within the boundary of the confined space.

2. Procedure

This procedure applies to all sites and workers who are required to enter a confined space or within the boundary of the confined space.

A summary of the Confined Space Entry Procedure can be found in Appendix B: Summary of Procedures for Confined Space Entry. This procedure has been developed in accordance with the WorkSafe WA Code of Practice: Confined Spaces and WorkSafe WA Code of Practice: How to manage work health and safety risks.

2.1 Risk Management

Risk assessments are completed by the worker and nominated site delegate of the workplace by completing a Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) Form and/or Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) and following the WACHS Job Hazard Analysis Procedure or Safe Work Method Statement Procedure to ensure all hazards are identified, and procedures are written and followed to control identified hazards.

The risks associated with confined spaces are to be controlled using the hierarchy of controls. It is important to constantly monitor and review control measures to ensure they continue to prevent or control exposure to hazardous acts or conditions.

Before work commences, all workers conducting the task must be briefed on the nature of the work to be conducted, the associated risks and the controls to be implemented in the process to be followed and the need to observe all safety requirements. If the scope of work changes or the efficiency of an existing control is reduced, work is to be stopped immediately, a review conducted, and necessary changes made to the JHA, SWMS and associated work practices. The work can recommence once this process has been completed.

All JHA's or SWMS completed for confined space entry tasks must be held at the job site whilst the confined space entry task is being undertaken. Once the job has been finalised, they must be filed as per the local area procedures.

2.2 Selecting Appropriate Equipment

All confined space entry equipment should be selected based on the hazard assessment and the task being performed as outlined in WorkSafe WA Code of Practice: Confined Spaces. Additionally, workers must wear the appropriate Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as identified in the JHA or SWMS form.

The individual who controls who goes into and out of the confined space and monitors all those within the confined space, also known as a confined space sentry, must comply to PPE requirements as per the JHA/SWMS and rescue plan (if required). This is in case of an emergency or urgent need for assistance.

Gas Monitors used to detect the presence of hazardous gases in the air must be calibrated and bump tested as per manufacturers specifications.

The person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) that provides confined space entry equipment must ensure that the equipment is suitable for its intended use, inspected and approved before use to ensure it is in good working condition. It must be calibrated and maintained as per manufacturer specifications. Defective or damaged equipment should be removed immediately and repaired or replaced. Workers should also check the PPE prior to donning.

The below standards shall be maintained:

- AS/NZS 600079.29.1;2017 Part 29.1: Gas detectors-performance requirements for detectors of flammable gases. The standards can be accessed via the WACHS Library.

2.3 Training Competency and Records

Nominated Site Delegate

Persons' in control who are managing works are required to have the below training:

- Working in Confined Space Toolbox training accessible in the WACHS MyLearning Learning Management System (LMS).

Confined Space Sentry

Workers intending to undertake this position must have the below nationally recognised units of competency:

- Mandatory units:
  - RIIWHS202 - Enter and work in confined spaces or equivalent
  - MSMWHS217 - Gas test atmospheres or equivalent
- Additional recommended units (not mandatory):
  - RIIRIS201 - Conduct local risk control or equivalent
  - MSMWHS201 - Conduct hazard analysis or equivalent.

Confined Space Worker

Workers intending to work in a confined space or within the boundary of the confined space must have the below nationally recognised units of competency:

- Mandatory units:
  - RIIWHS202 - Enter and work in confined spaces or equivalent
- Additional recommended units (not mandatory):
  - RIIRIS201 - Conduct local risk control or equivalent
  - MSMWHS201 - Conduct hazard analysis or equivalent.

Note: in addition to the confined space training and competency, all workers intending to undertake work need to be suitably trained and possess qualifications and licenses relevant to the scope of work being conducted.

Contractors are required to upload their qualification onto the WACHS Online Contractor Induction during induction and WACHS workers are required to keep a record of their qualification on the WACHS MyLearning LMS by contacting the regional Learning and Development team.

2.4 Rescue Plan

A valid Rescue Plan must be created, validated, and issued by the Sentry. The Rescue Plan must be revalidated daily for the duration of any ongoing confined space work, with all changes or updates clearly documented.

Each Rescue Plan remains valid for a maximum of seven (7) days from the date of issue, regardless of whether it has been activated or not.

First aid equipment, communication devices and rescue procedures should be rehearsed with relevant workers to ensure that they are efficient and effective. Workers performing a rescue must be adequately trained in confined space entry and must be provided with the resources to safely and effectively execute the Rescue Plan.

The WACHS Rescue Plan Template is to be used as a guide when developing a rescue plan. A previously created rescue plan can be used provided there are no unique circumstances with the task requiring the plan to be modified. This needs to be assessed before the job commences.

If a person inside a confined space has been overcome by lack of oxygen or by airborne contaminants, it should always be assumed that entry for rescue is unsafe unless air-supplied respiratory protective equipment is used.

Consider the below when establishing emergency procedures for confined spaces.

Relevant consideration	Questions
Location of the confined space	• What is the geographic location of the space? • How accessible is it in an emergency? • How far away is it from appropriate medical facilities?
Communications	• How can workers working inside the space communicate to people outside in an emergency? • Exactly how will the alarm be raised and by whom?

	• Has planning been done to ensure that rescue and emergency personnel can access the workplace during night shift, weekends and holiday periods?

Rescue and resuscitation equipment	• What kinds of emergencies are contemplated?
	• Have you identified and provided suitable rescue and resuscitation equipment dependent on the potential emergencies? For example, taking into account:
	  ○ the nature of the work being carried out at the workplace
	  ○ the size and location of the workplace
	  ○ the number and composition of the workers and other persons at the workplace
	• Is the selected rescue equipment kept in close proximity to the confined space so that it can be used immediately?

Capabilities of rescuers	• Are rescuers properly trained, sufficiently fit to carry out their task and capable of using any equipment provided for rescue (e.g. breathing apparatus, lifelines and firefighting equipment)? • How will rescuers be protected during the emergency operation?
First aid	• Is appropriate first aid available for immediate use? • Are trained first aid personnel available to make proper use of any necessary first aid equipment?
Local emergency services - if they are to be relied on for rescue	• How will the local emergency services (e.g. fire brigade) be notified of an incident? • What information about the particular dangers in the confined space will be given to them on their arrival? • Have prior arrangements been made with local emergency services to ensure they are able to respond in a reasonable time and have the specialist confined space retrieval equipment readily available?

Table 1: Considerations when establishing emergency procedures for confined spaces adapted from WorkSafe WA Code of Practice – Confined Spaces.

Initial Atmospheric Testing

It is the responsibility of the competent person to coordinate a time to conduct the initial atmospheric test of a confined space. Continuous or periodic monitoring during occupancy is essential to detect any changes.

There are three (3) ways to conduct an atmospheric test of a confined space, as listed below:

1. a bumped and calibrated 5 Gas Monitor held inside or lowered into a confined space
2. use of a Remote Sampling Telescopic Probe
3. physical entry by a qualified & competent Gas Tester, donning appropriate respiratory protection.

Note: a bumped and calibrated 5 Gas Monitor must be used, regardless of the method adopted.

A decision on the method to adopt should factor in the size, location and nature of the confined space. An initial atmospheric test should record readings from all sections and areas of the tank to ensure the entire atmosphere is safe.

Completed Documentation

All completed documentation must be retained as per the WACHS Corporate Recordkeeping Compliance Policy.

2.5 Isolations

Before a confined space can be opened, any electrical and mechanical isolations are required to be placed and verified as per WACHS Lockout and Tagout Works Procedure (LOTO Procedure).

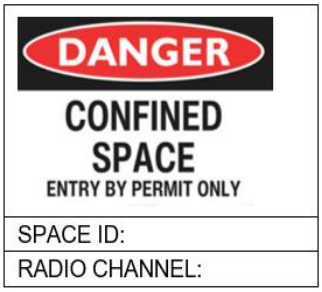
Refer to the LOTO Procedure for any LOTO non-compliances e.g. person lock has been left on when the person has signed off.

2.6 Entering and Working a Confined Space

Multiple stakeholders are required for the efficient, and successful management of confined spaces. It is important to establish who these stakeholders are early and ensure clear and concise communication throughout the process. In turn, this creates a proactive work environment and aids in foreseeing any potential risks or delays.

Preparation

As soon as a confined space is scheduled to be opened, preparation of the following is required prior to the scheduled date and time.



- **Signage**:
  - prepare one (1) Confined Space sign per confined space point.
  - ensure the Confined Space Name or ID and nominated site delegate contact details are correct as these details change for each work order.
- **Hard Barricading**:
  - hard barricading may be required if there is a risk of people falling from height
  - this hazard can be introduced when parts of equipment are removed for various reasons, examples may include but not limited to:
    - pit lids being removed
    - removal of doors from tanks
  - hard barricades must be erected or installed before the fall hazard is exposed.

ATTENTION

In areas where there is a potential for the public to access the confined space, the space must not be opened and left unattended at any time.

Ventilation

Without appropriate controls in place, the contents or residual contents of a confined space can cause a potentially hazardous atmosphere, e.g. fuel, oily waste, and sewage tanks. In consultation with stakeholders, sufficient controls shall be established prior to such confined spaces being opened, e.g. ventilation (extraction/forced), exclusion zones etc. Refer to WorkSafe WA Code of Practice: How to manage work health and safety risks.

As soon as a confined space is scheduled to be opened, the nominated site delegate shall liaise with the workers for establishing and maintaining the confined space to ensure adequate ventilation has been achieved prior to the scheduled works to be completed (date and time). They will then notify the worker completing the work of the scheduled date and time they will be required.

Note: the entity in charge of the confined space might also be the one executing the tasks within it or they may be separate entities.

Initial Opening

It is the competent person's responsibility to open the confined space and perform an initial atmospheric test. The test must be conducted using a calibrated 5 Gas Monitor with a remote sampling telescopic probe or equivalent monitor. They are required to record the initial atmospheric test readings.

Once the competent person has deemed the immediate area and confined space a safe atmosphere, it is a requirement for a second competent person to confirm the confined space has a safe atmosphere by viewing the gas monitor results.

Record the confirmatory atmospheric test readings accordingly.

Note: a space may become a confined space if work that is to be carried out in the space would generate harmful concentrations of airborne contaminants. Temporary control measures such as providing temporary ventilation or achieving a satisfactory pre-entry gas test will not cause a confined space to be declassified.

Handover

At handover, the confined space atmospheric levels shall be within the below levels. The acceptable limit for volatile organic compounds (VOCs) is <300ppm for confined spaces containing known sources of fuel. This represents 5% of the lower explosive limit (LEL).

O2	LEL	H2S	CO	VOCs
>19.5 up to <23.5%	<5% LEL	<10 ppm	<30 ppm	

Should readings exceed the above limits, the confined space should be allowed to ventilate for 12-24 hours before a re-test to be conducted and handover to take place.

Completing of Work

On completion of work the area must be reinstated to ensure the area is safe and left as per WACHS standards.

- **Signage:**
  - using either cable ties or double-sided tape, secure a confined space sign near every entry point so it is clearly visible, however will not impede access and egress from the confined space when required.

- **Barricading:**
  - Replacement lids or covers shall be installed over the entry point, accompanied with danger tape and a completed information tag. Should an appropriate replacement lid or cover not be supplied, the original lid or cover installed in the 'half-moon' position can be utilised as a form of hard barricading, however, should be used as a last resort.
  - The immediate area shall be barricaded using danger tape or caution tape with a completed information tag attached if the confined space entry is deemed to be in a low-risk area.
  - Should a confined space entry point be located below a fixed ladder, caution tape with a completed information tag attached shall be placed around the top landing of the fixed ladder notifying persons of the open confined space below.

ATTENTION

In areas where there is a potential for the public to access the confined space, the space must be reinstated to its original safe state and not left unattended until this has occurred.

Hand Back

Upon the nominated site delegate receiving confirmation that all scope of work has been completed for a confined space and access is no longer required, the nominated site delegate is to initiate the hand back process.

Note: the nominated site delegate as a minimum, must hold the same qualifications as a confined space worker if their head or upper body is in the confined space or within the boundary of the confined space.

The hand back process outlined below is to be followed:

1. scope of work has been completed as per work order
2. nominated site delegate completes a final inspection (if required)
3. nominated site delegate accepts completed work
4. workplace is reinstated back to its original state
5. work area is handed back to nominated site delegate

2.7 Failure or Breach of Confined Space Procedure

If there is a confined space procedure breach:

- the site delegate will investigate the alleged breach and possible reasons for the breach
- complete a WACHS Safety Risk Report Form (SRRF)
- determine appropriate action to be taken.

Hazards and incidents must be reported in line with the WACHS Hazard and Incident Management Procedure.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) is responsible for:
- ensuring workers complete required inductions
- providing training and supervision information
- ensuring workers have been trained or deemed competent
- providing and/or ensuring appropriate use of RPE and/or PPE and usage guidelines
- ensuring that equipment used meets standards and is regularly inspected and maintained
- establishing and maintain safe work practices.

The **regional manager** Infrastructure and Support Services (RMISS) is responsible for:
- establishing and maintaining safe work practices
- selecting the nominated site delegate; supervisor or manager or nominated delegate
- authorisation of works to begin when risks are high or intolerable
- managing and overseeing this procedure
- operational processes being undertaken and oversight of compliance.

The **nominated site delegate,** as nominated by RMISS, is responsible for:
- ensuring workers complete required inductions
- providing information, training, and supervision
- verifying workers have necessary licences and training (copies must be obtained and retained)
- ensuring gas monitors are calibrated as per original equipment manufacturer manual (copies must be obtained and retained)
- providing confined space procedures and plans and ensuring they are followed
- ensuring risk assessments have been conducted before the start of any confined space work
- ensuring that equipment specific instructions (Safe Work Method Statements) are developed and inspected periodically (at least annually)
- reporting hazards and incidents in line with the WACHS Hazard and Incident Management Procedure.

The **regional work health safety and security manager** is responsible for providing:
- advice to managers and supervisors on confined space requirements in the workplace as it relates to monitoring and compliance
- advice and consulting with managers and staff on how to manage hazards and risks that have been identified and raised via SRRF reporting.

The **confined space sentry** is responsible for:
- keeping a list of exactly who has entered or left the confined space or within the boundary of the confined space

- ensuring unauthorised workers do not enter the confined space or within the boundary of the confined space
- ensuring safety of all workers in the confined through ongoing communication and vigilance
- conducting continuous atmospheric testing
- creating and validating the rescue plan for confined space entry
- inspecting the rescue equipment
- activating the emergency alarm as necessary for confined space situation.

Workers are responsible for:

- performing risk assessment
- using confined space procedures to control hazardous energies
- taking reasonable care of their own and others' safety and health
- undertaking the relevant training
- cooperating with PCBU in carrying out safety and health requirements.

All staff are required to comply with the directions in WACHS policies and procedures as per their roles and responsibilities. Guidelines are the recommended course of action for WACHS, and staff are expected to use this information to guide practice. If staff are unsure which policies procedures and guidelines apply to their role or scope of practice, and/or are unsure of the application of directions they should consult their manager in the first instance.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring for this document is conducted by the People Capability and Culture and Infrastructure and Environment Directorates to ensure compliance across all WACHS sites. This involves periodic reviews of the following:

- comparison of risk assessments with work orders raised in Agility
- periodic assessment of site-specific registers, including monitoring inspection and maintenance frequency
- regular assessment of the Online Contractor Induction System to ensure that contractors have been inducted according to WACHS expectations for safe working practices.

Evaluation of this document will be undertaken collaboratively by the People Capability and Culture and Infrastructure and Environment Directorates utilising the outcomes of periodic review and auditing data as well as stakeholder feedback.

5. References

AS 2865 - 1995 – Safe working in a confined space

Health Services Act 2016 (WA)

WACHS Corporate Recordkeeping Compliance Policy

WACHS Lockout and Tagout Works Procedure

Work Health and Safety (General) Regulations 2022 (WA)

Work Health and Safety Act 2020 (WA)

WorkSafe Code of Practice: How to manage work health and safety risks

WorkSafe WA Code of Practice: Confined Spaces

6. Definitions

Term	Definition
Confined space	A confined space is an enclosed or partially enclosed space that: • is not designed or intended to be occupied by a person • is or is designed or intended to be, at normal atmospheric pressure while any person is in the space; and • is or is likely to be a risk to health and safety from: • has an atmosphere that does not have a safe oxygen level, or • has contaminants, including airborne gases, vapours and dusts, that may cause injury from fire or explosion, or • has harmful concentrations of any airborne contaminants, or • has engulfment. A confined space is determined by the hazards associated with a set of specific circumstances and not just because work is performed in a small space. For guidance refer to Appendix A: Determining a confined space.
Confined space sentry	A confined space sentry is an individual who controls who goes into and out of the confined space and monitors all those within the confined space.
Confined space worker	A confined space worker is any individual who will be working in a confined space or within the boundary of the confined space.

Hazard	A hazard is a situation or item that has the potential to cause harm to people, property or the environment
Hierarchy of controls	A hierarchy of control is a process used to keep employees safe from injury and illness in the workplace. The five steps in the hierarchy of controls, from most effective to least effective, are elimination, substitution, engineering controls, administrative controls and personal protective equipment.
Job Hazard Analysis form	The Job Hazard Analysis form (JHA) is a document that outlines work activities to be carried out at a workplace into logical job steps, identification of hazards associated with each step and the controls for those hazards.
Personal Protective Equipment	Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is equipment and clothing that is used or worn by an individual person to protect themselves against, or minimise their exposure to, workplace risks. It includes items such as face masks and respirators, coveralls, goggles, helmets, gloves and footwear.
Person Conducting Business or Undertaking	Person Conducting Business or Undertaking (PCBU) conducts a business or undertaking alone or with others. WACHS is considered a PCBU.
Risk	A risk is the likelihood and consequence of injury or harm occurring.
Risk assessment	Risk assessment is a systematic process of evaluating the potential risks that may be involved in a task or piece of equipment and the likelihood of a hazard causing harm to a person.
Work	Work is any activity, physical or mental, carried out in the course of a business, industry, commerce, an occupation or a profession.
Worker	A worker is any person who carries out work for a person conducting a business or undertaking, including work as an employee, contractor or subcontractor (or their employee), self-employed person, outworker, apprentice or trainee, work experience student, employee of a labour hire company placed with a 'host employer' or a volunteer.
Workplace	Workplace is any place where a person works, including residences provided to support works

7. Document Summary

Coverage	WACHS-wide
Audience	All workers
Records Management	Non Clinical: Corporate Recordkeeping Compliance Policy
Related Legislation	*Health Services Act 2016* (WA) *Work Health and Safety Act 2020* (WA) Work Health and Safety (General) Regulations 2022 (WA)
Related Mandatory Policies / Frameworks	• MP 0006/16 Risk Management Policy • DoH Integrity Policy Framework • DoH Risk, Compliance and Audit Policy Framework • DoH Work Health and Safety Policy Framework
Related WACHS Policy Documents	• Hazard and Incident Management Procedure • Job Hazard Analysis Procedure • Lockout and Tagout Procedure • Safe Work Method Statements Procedure • Work Health and Safety Policy
Other Related Documents	• WACHS Rescue Plan Template
Related Forms	• Job Hazard Analysis Form • Safety Risk Report Form • Safe Work Method Statement
Related Training	Available from MyLearning: • WACHS Confined Space Toolbox Training
Aboriginal Health Impact Statement Declaration (ISD)	4437
National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards	1.07, 1.08, 1.09, 1.10, 1.20, 1.21, 1.22, 1.25, 1.29, 1.31
Aged Care Quality Standards	Nil
Chief Psychiatrist's Standards for Clinical Care	Nil
Other Standards	Available from WACHS Library: • AS/NZS 600079.29.1;2017 Part 29.1: Gas detectors-performance requirements for detectors of flammable gases

8. Document Control

Version	Published date	Current from	Summary of changes
1.00	14 July 2025	14 July 2025	New procedure

9. Approval

Policy Owner	Executive Director Infrastructure and Environment
Co-approver	Executive Director People Capability and Culture
Contact	Director Infrastructure
Business Unit	WACHS Infrastructure and Environment
EDRMS #	ED-CO-25-277460

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

Appendix A: Determining a Confined Space

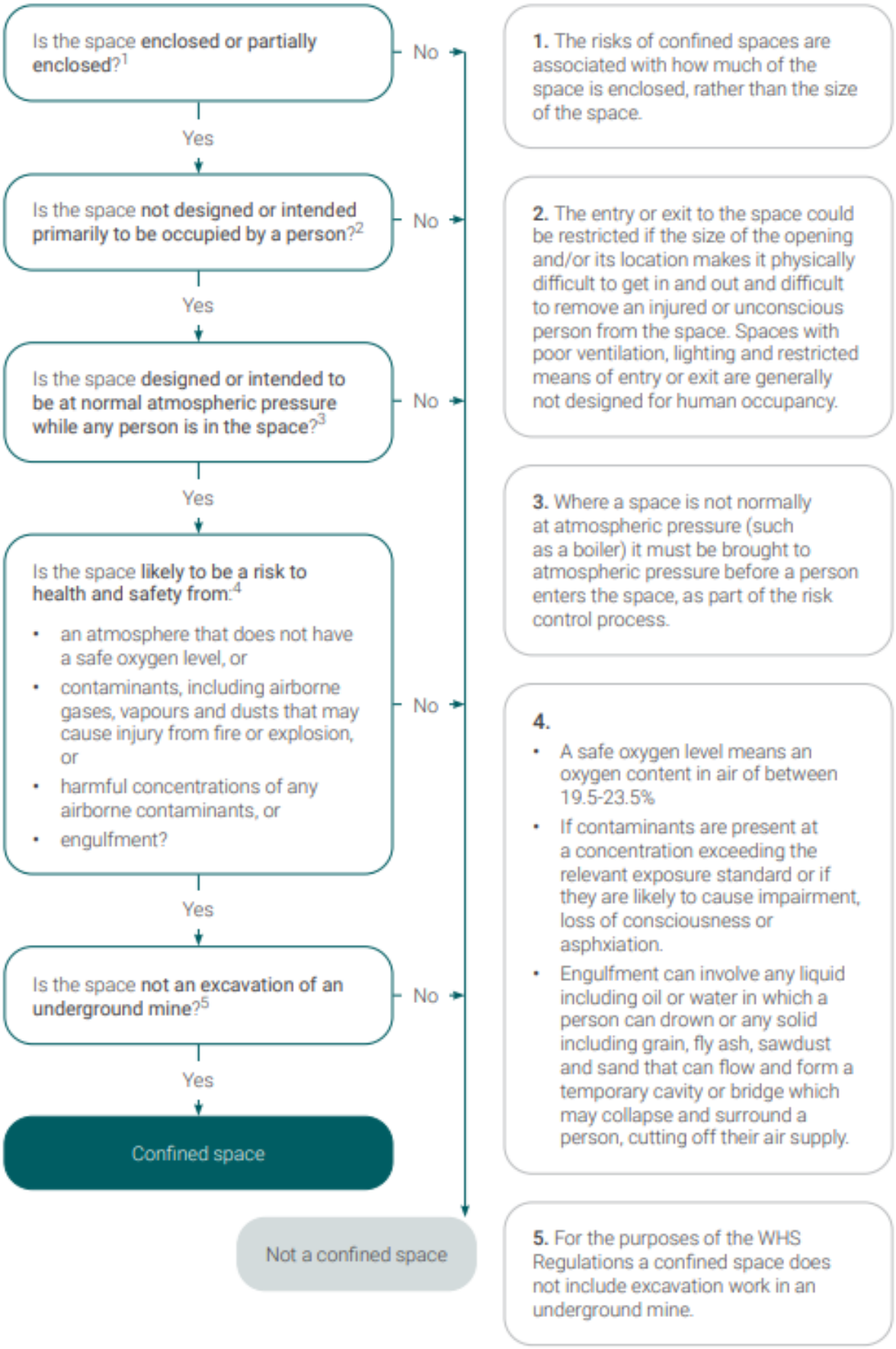


Table 2: Confined Space Criteria adapted from: (WorkSafe WA Code of Practice – Confined Spaces)

Appendix B: Summary of Procedures for Confined Space Entry

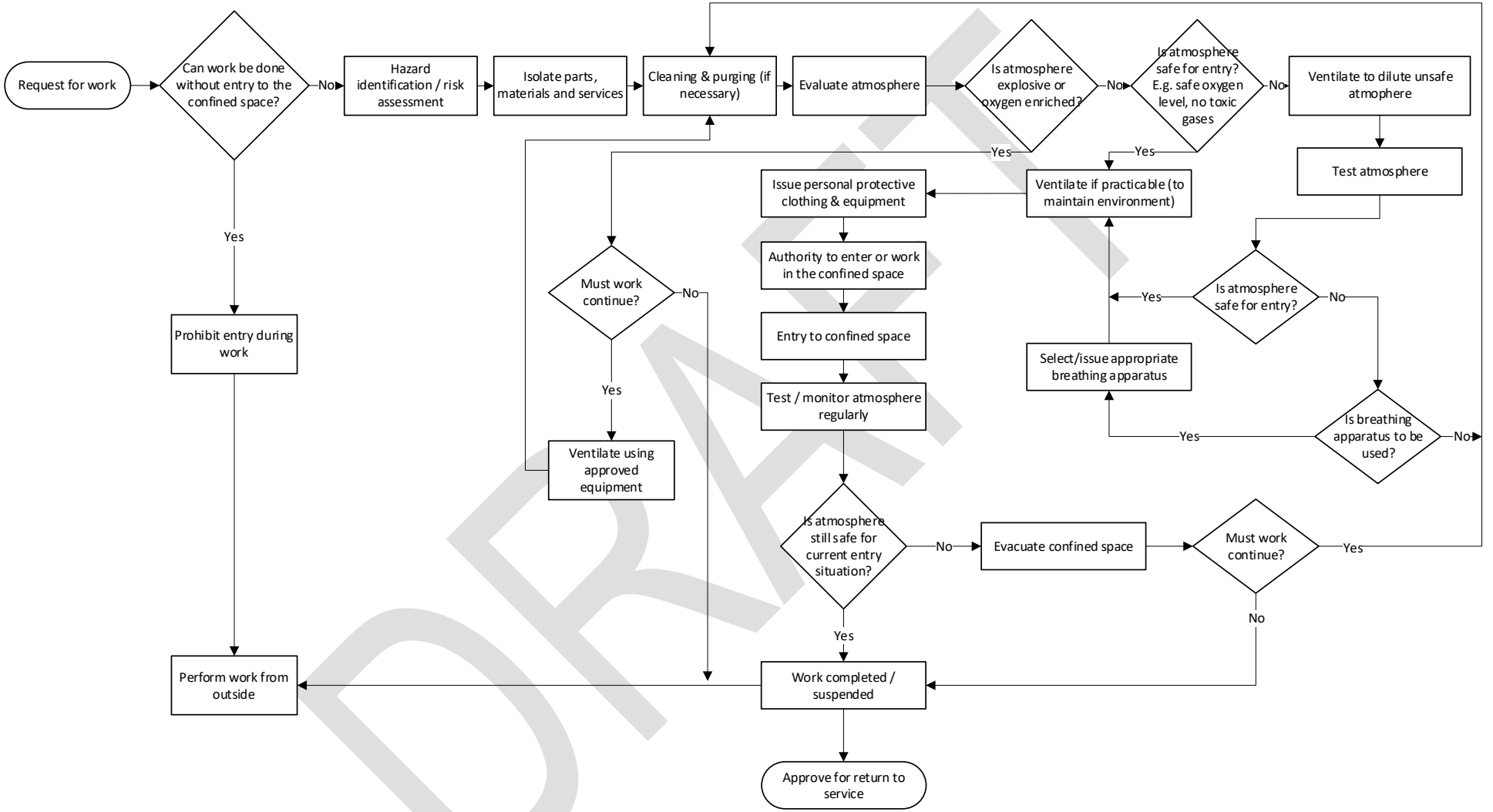


Table 3: Summary of Procedures for Confined Space Entry adapted from: (AS2865 – 1995, Summary of Procedures for Confined Space Entry)