



Confined Spaces

Keep Safe in A Tight Space

A confined space is any enclosed or partially enclosed space large enough to enter and perform work, with restricted means of entry or exit, that is not designed or intended for continuous occupancy. Some examples of confined spaces at Northwestern include manholes, tunnels, tanks, boilers, vaults, attics, crawl spaces, and ventilation ducts. Additionally, many confined spaces can have limited ventilation, toxic atmospheres or other hazards such as pressurized steam, water, electricity etc., that require additional isolation or de-energization measures prior to entering a confined space.

The Office of Risk Management has Confined Space and Control of Hazardous Energy (Lockout Tagout) Programs to provide guidance on how you, your colleagues and contractors can remain safe while working in confined spaces. Below are certain highlights to the programs:

Confined Space Program Highlights

- Provide definitions of permit and non-permit required confined spaces.
- List responsibilities of entrants, supervisors and attendants.
- Written Safe Operating Procedures (SOPs) are required for all permit-required confined space entries.
- A confined space checklist to ensure Northwestern and contractor requirements are met when contractors are performing work in confined spaces.
- References to the Control of Hazardous Energy (LOTO) Program when isolating or de-energizing hazards (such as steam, water, electricity) in confined spaces.
- Provide guidance on requirements when working on or near live utilities.
- Confined space assessment form – section F: Other Hazards include pressurized steam/condensate and section L: informs confined space entrants that energy isolation may be required prior to entry if any of sections C - F are checked.

Control of Hazardous Energy Highlights

- Lists responsibilities of authorized employees.
- Lists the steps and requirements of LOTO, including removing locks and tags, group LOTO requirements and periodic inspections.
- Recordkeeping requirements.

Other information and how it affects you?

In addition to our programs and to ensure compliance with, the Office of Risk Management and Facilities employees will:

- Re-assess all of our confined spaces on the Chicago and Evanston Campuses, starting with Evanston steam vaults.
- Further develop written lockout tagout procedures specific for all equipment and machinery, starting with steam vaults.
- All Facilities team members that perform work in confined spaces will re-attend confined space re-training.
- As you are aware, non-compliance with this program or any safety procedure is subject to disciplinary action per Northwestern's [Staff Handbook](#) and [Environmental Health and Safety Policy](#)

If we prepare for the unexpected, we're all protected!

Prior to entering any confined space follow the steps below:

1. Contact Risk Management when planning work inside a confined space.
2. Review the confined space assessment for the area that you plan to work. If contractors are performing work, provide the confined space assessment to contractors.
3. Plan all jobs and tasks using the SOP form prior to entering a confined space. Approval is required from Risk Management and Facilities.
4. De-energize or isolate hazards such as high pressure steam, prior to performing any work-related activities. If it is absolutely impossible to de-energize or isolate, develop a Safe Operating Procedure and complete a Live Utility Work Authorization form.
5. Ensure all equipment such as ladders, air monitoring equipment and tools are available, working properly and set-up on-site.
6. Ensure all rescue equipment is working and in place or an outside rescue company is on site prior to entry.
7. Contact NU Police Dispatch prior to confined space entry and after work is complete.
8. When in doubt, ask questions and err on the side of being overly cautious and safe.