

Seattle Fire Department
Permit Required Confined Space Policy
July 2009

Who does this policy apply to?

Any individual, group of individuals, contractor or employer that makes entry into permit required confined spaces inside the City of Seattle.

What is a “permit required confined space”?

A confined space is a space that is large enough for a person to enter, has limited means of access and is not designed for continued human occupancy. It may be a Permit Required Confined Space if it contains or has a reasonable potential to contain one or more of the following:

- A hazardous material or atmosphere, or
- An engulfment or drowning hazard, or
- Inwardly converging walls that taper to a smaller cross section, or
- Any other serious health or safety risk.

For the complete definition and explanation of the requirements you must thoroughly read and understand the *Washington Administrative Code 296-809 - Permit Required Confined Spaces*. Any parties involved in entering confined spaces are responsible to be thoroughly familiar with the requirements of applicable state and federal regulations before performing such entries.

What is the Seattle Fire Department’s role in my permit required confined space entry program?

The state law effectively permits you to list the Seattle Fire Department as an “Off Site Rescue Service” on your confined space permit, provided certain conditions are met. This may allow you to utilize services the city already provides to help you meet the requirements of the state law.

It is up to you as the responsible party to ensure that all the requirements of the state law are met.

Why can’t I just dial 911? Won’t the Seattle Fire Department show up anyway?

The Seattle Fire Department will respond to any report of a person or persons trapped or injured in a confined space. We have been providing these services for several years and will respond regardless of whether or not we are listed as your service. This does not mean that we meet the requirements for a rescue service for the particular hazards of your confined space as defined in the WAC.

State law specifically excludes posting of 911 or other emergency numbers as an offsite rescue plan without meeting the evaluation requirements of the WAC.

Performing the required evaluation will determine if the service we deliver is sufficient to meet the requirements of your entry. **You** are responsible for determining if the response provided by the Seattle Fire Department meets **your** needs or if supplemental rescue services are required.

What are the rescue capabilities of the Seattle Fire Department?

All Seattle Fire Department Operations Division personnel are trained to perform **limited** entry into a confined space provided that they perform a hazard assessment and all recognized hazards are appropriately addressed. They are limited to making entry when they can see the victim from the access /egress point and there are no obstacles to hinder removal of the victim from the space.

A smaller group of specialized Seattle Fire Department resources are capable of performing more complex and extended confined space operations.

All levels of this response structure have limits on their availability. Their primary role is to respond to medical and fire emergencies throughout the city. These other obligations may delay the arrival of resources to a confined space incident. These limits must be considered when assessing the abilities of the Seattle Fire Department provide off site confined space rescue services.

Please contact the acting SFD Deputy 2 at (206) 386-1060 for specific information regarding SFD involvement in the permit required confined space program.

What requirements have to be met to list the Seattle Fire Department as an “Off Site Rescue Service”?

The process of using the Fire Department as an approved off site rescue service has two sides.

- **The Individual(s) Performing the Entry**

The contractor or Responsible party for the entry must determine if the resources and delivery system of the Seattle Fire Department are adequate for the entry being performed. This is done using the criteria set out in WAC 296-809-50014. Additionally the space must be made available to the Fire Department for inspection and simulated rescues if appropriate. The Responsible Party is obligated to disclose all actual or potential hazards that may be encountered in the space and the full scope of the work to be performed.

- **The Fire Department**

The Fire Department must evaluate the entry conditions and space to determine if providing off site rescue services is within the scope of its capabilities. This decision will be based on the hazards likely to be encountered in the space and the proximity of the space to appropriate resources. While it is recommended by WAC 296-809 that the

Rescue Team performs a simulated rescue as a performance evaluation, the Seattle Fire Department shall not normally provide this opportunity except in unique circumstances. The Fire department will permit the responsible party to interview the on-shift Technical Rescue Officer and inspect the equipment used by the fire department for such Rescue Operations.