
29 C.F.R. § 1915.12

Precautions and the order of testing before entering confined and enclosed spaces and other dangerous atmospheres.

The employer shall ensure that atmospheric testing is performed in the following sequence: oxygen content, flammability, toxicity.

(a) *Oxygen content.* (1) The employer shall ensure that the following spaces are visually inspected and tested by a competent person to determine the atmosphere's oxygen content prior to initial entry into the space by an employee:

- (i) Spaces that have been sealed, such as, but not limited to, spaces that have been coated and closed up, and non-ventilated spaces that have been freshly painted;
- (ii) Spaces and adjacent spaces that contain or have contained combustible or flammable liquids or gases;
- (iii) Spaces and adjacent spaces that contain or have contained liquids, gases, or solids that are toxic, corrosive, or irritant;
- (iv) Spaces and adjacent spaces that have been fumigated; and
- (v) Spaces containing materials or residues of materials that create an oxygen-deficient atmosphere.

(2) If the space to be entered contains an oxygen deficient atmosphere, the space shall be labeled “Not Safe for Workers” or, if oxygen-enriched, “Not Safe for Workers—Not Safe for Hot Work.” If an oxygen-deficient or oxygen-enriched atmosphere is found, ventilation shall be provided at volumes and flow rates sufficient to ensure that the oxygen content is maintained at or above 19.5 percent and below 22.0 percent by volume. The warning label may be removed when the oxygen content is equal to or greater than 19.5 and less than 22.0 percent by volume.

(3) An employee may not enter a space where the oxygen content, by volume, is below 19.5 percent or above 22.0 percent. Exception: An employee may enter for emergency rescue or for a short duration for installation of ventilation equipment necessary to start work in the space provided:

- (i) The atmosphere in the space is monitored for oxygen content, by volume, continuously; and
- (ii) Respiratory protection and other appropriate personal protective equipment and clothing are provided in accordance with subpart I of this part.

Note to paragraph (a):

Other provisions for work in IDLH atmospheres are located in subpart I of this part.

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