

TRAINING FOR CONFINED SPACE WORKING – ARE YOU FULLY COMPLIANT?

Brian Grunes, Arco Professional Safety Services Confined Space training expert offers guidance on the risks of confined space working and the upcoming changes to the City & Guilds training accreditation

Q. What kind of working situation could pose a confined space risk?

The existence of confined spaces in some workplaces can be reasonably easy to identify and understand. Tanks, vessels, sewers among others are known to be confined spaces to people working in those environments; however, the existence of confined spaces in commercial or non-industrial premises are less well known. Service ducts, lofts and void spaces, plant rooms or poorly ventilated rooms can be confined spaces too and often found in commercial buildings, hospitals, universities and residential dwellings. Some confined spaces will also develop during construction, or when work activities such as welding or cleaning is being carried out. These spaces are just as hazardous and demonstrate that systems of safe working must be in place in every environment.

Q. What are the dangers of working in confined spaces?

A significant number of people are killed or seriously injured working in confined spaces in the UK each year. Specified risks include: serious injury due to fire or explosion; loss of consciousness arising from increased body temperature; loss of consciousness or asphyxiation arising from gas, fume, vapour, or lack of oxygen; drowning from an increase in the level of a liquid and asphyxiation arising from a free-flowing solid or being unable to reach a respirable environment. These risks occur across a wide range of industries, including manufacturing, utilities, maritime, construction, offshore and agriculture. Those at risk include workers in the confined space itself and those who may have to try to rescue them when things go wrong. Despite legislation and health and safety measures, confined space working poses a very high risk and it's important to ensure that the right people have the correct skills and capabilities for the roles they undertake. Training is just one part of ensuring the safety of people working in confined spaces.

Q. What should you consider when preparing to undertake confined space working?

Once you have identified that work will be undertaken in a confined space it is important that the right controls are put in place. The Approved Code of Practice (ACoP) L1010 Safe Working in Confined Spaces provides details on the relevant provisions that must be considered. This includes an initial assessment as to whether the work required could be completed without the need to enter the confined space. If that is not possible, then taking the necessary precautions for safe working in a confined space, which will include training, supervision, ensuring safe access and egress, testing and monitoring the atmosphere before and during the procedure, having a reliable communications system in place and suitable equipment for the job. In the event of an accident you would need to show you have followed the code or complied with the law in some other way otherwise a court will find you at fault.

Q. What kind of training is needed for confined space working and who needs it?

Confined space training is essential for those managing or supervising confined space teams as well as those working in confined spaces and for rescue and recovery teams. Confined space training options range from Confined Space Awareness training, through Low, Medium and High-Risk courses, plus Rescue Management and training covering the selection and maintenance of equipment involved in safe confined space working, such as gas monitors, breathing apparatus and personal protective equipment. If the risks are assessed to be too high or the job too complex for in-house teams, you should consider outsourcing jobs to confined space services experts.

The confined space courses offered by Arco Safety Services are mapped against a range of National Occupational Standards (NOS) used by a range of Awarding Organisations (AOs) to produce assessment criteria for the level of qualification required. The main AO that we use for confined space is City & Guilds, who offer a suite of associated qualifications.

Q. There's been some updates to the City & Guilds accreditations – could you explain what these are?

Following the changes made in 2020 to the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Confined Spaces, City & Guilds reviewed their Confined Space qualifications and announced a new suite that became available earlier this year. The new 6160 suite of qualifications replace the existing 6150 ones which will continue to be available until 31st December.

Q. I've only just completed my City & Guilds 6150 (or: My City and Guilds 6150 Qualification is still valid for a year), do I need to complete the new qualification immediately?

These new qualifications are available now, with the existing qualifications (6150) being available until 31st December 2021. For anyone holding a current 6150 qualification, it will remain valid for three years from its completion so there's no need to undertake the new 6160 qualification until it's due to expire.

Q. Where are your training facilities?

Training can be delivered at our national specialist training facilities or at customer's premises, utilising either their facility (based on a set criteria) or one of our mobile confined space units. Arco Professional Safety Services currently has four specialist Safety Centres located at Enfield (South), Stafford (Midlands), Warrington (North West) and the newly-opened Linlithgow (Scotland). These centres are purpose-built facilities that have been specially designed to simulate real life hazards in a controlled environment.

Q. What are the training options at the moment, given current restrictions due to Covid-19?

Continuing to provide practical skills is essential in critical and high-risk industries and so Arco Professional Safety Services has adapted operations at its training centres to provide attendees with a safe learning environment and the reassurance they need to join safety critical training programmes. This includes new precautions, such as pre-start COVID questionnaires, non-contact body temperature checks, staggered break times to minimise unnecessary people movement and mixing and the use of larger rooms equipped with enclosure screens to ensure adequate social distancing. Arco Professional Safety Services has also launched a number of video conference options including a Confined Space Working Awareness half-day course and blended learning options, mixing online theory with practical learning.

Q. Do you offer any other kind of assistance for confined space working or emergencies?

Our services team provide confined space practical advice and service delivery in the areas of supervision, rescue, inspection, surveying & mapping, and cleaning & maintenance. Arco Professional Safety Services also provides 24/7 dedicated standby rescue teams and specialist

confined space rescue consultants who are highly experienced in confined spaces safety and provide both 'entry' and 'non-entry' rescue solutions to businesses.

For more information on Arco's Professional Safety Services Confined Spaces services, please visit <https://www.arcoservices.co.uk/home/confined-space>

About Arco: What they do and how they're different

Arco is the UK's leading safety products and services company. Its core purpose is to keep people safe at work. It distributes a world-class range of over 170,000 quality assured, branded and own brand products, including personal protective equipment, workwear, safety footwear, gloves, workplace safety and hygiene products. It is unique.

Arco Professional Safety Services provide consultancy, training, services and equipment to manage the most complex and high-risk, high hazard scenarios. Specialising in working at height, confined space and respiratory management, they deliver solutions for those working in situations with the highest risk of serious injury or irreversible damage to health.

Headquartered in Hull, Arco reaches its customers through its extensive product catalogue, website and national network of retail stores. The company has sales of over £320m and employs more than 1600 people nationwide. Its 400,000 sqft National Distribution Centre distributes products to 25k customers in the UK and Ireland, dispatching 150 pallets and 8000 parcels a day. Arco makes it easy for customers to procure and issue PPE with services such as digital procurement, vending, a mobile issue unit, wearer packing and branded workwear from their in-house Clothing Centre based in Preston.

As the market leader, Arco is committed to helping shape the UK's safety agenda in order to ensure workers go home safe every night. Through an extensive public affairs programme, Arco experts have contributed to some of the key debates on health and safety regulation, product quality and standards, PPE procurement and emergency planning.

Arco is committed to providing safety equipment that is genuine and compliant with relevant standards and regulations, Arco tests both its own product range as well as carrying out surveillance on other products in the market to ensure compliance. With a five-step product assurance process, Arco remains the only safety distributor with an independently accredited testing laboratory, this assisted by a team of specialists in their Xiamen, China office who support with sourcing, quality control and factory inspections. Additionally, it is a member of the BSIF Registered Safety Suppliers Scheme, and Arco experts sit on numerous Standards Boards.

Arco was the first member within the H&S industry to join the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) incorporating its internationally recognised code of labour practice into its own ethical policy and in 2010 became a member of Sedex, the Supplier Ethical Data Exchange. To ensure ethical standards are met throughout its supply chain, Arco carries out regular independent supplier auditing. Working with the ETI and other regulatory bodies, the company plays a leading role in helping to educate and eliminate modern day slavery across the globe.

Principles of sustainable development have long been embedded in the way Arco does business. Arco's Sustainability Action team has committed to ensuring the business behaves responsibly in all areas, investing significant time and resource to identify ways to reduce plastics, packaging and recycling.

Founded in 1884 and with a heritage spanning five generations, Arco demonstrates traditional family values and is dedicated to its Corporate Social Responsibility policy. Arco is committed to help keep communities safe, inspire young people to achieve their full potential and to enhance local life, making the communities they serve better places in which to live, work and invest. It does this through charity and community support, donating 1% of pre-tax profits each year. Arco also gives colleagues two days' paid leave each year to volunteer in the community and the opportunity to partner with and sponsor community groups and charities, forming lasting relationships that support them in the vital services that they offer.

For more information, visit www.arco.co.uk.