

# At Work

## Clearing The Air About Working In Confined Spaces

(NAPSA)—For some people, being in a tight spot at work is a daily occurrence.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), many workplaces contain spaces that are considered "confined" because they have limited means of entry and exit, and their configurations hinder the activities of any employees who must enter, work in and exit them.

For example, employees who work in process vessels, tanks, silos, storage bins, hoppers, vaults, pits, or other kinds of large storage containers generally must squeeze in and out through narrow openings and perform their tasks while cramped or contorted in spaces not designed for continuous occupancy by workers.

Confined spaces that contain any hazards like toxic gasses, moving machinery, or other hazards are considered to be "permit-required confined spaces" by OSHA. Among other things, OSHA requires a permit system for entry, special training for workers who work in these spaces, attendants who monitor the spaces, and rescue teams.

Tragic accidents are all too common in confined spaces. Recently, a Florida contractor was fined for an accident that left one worker dead and three injured.

The worker died after rescuing one of his two brothers on his work crew, who was overcome by toxic sewage fumes in a confined lift station.

There are many ways to protect workers in confined spaces and to



**Storage tanks and other confined spaces pose a number of hazards for employees who work in them.**

rescue those who get in trouble. One example of rescue operations is the Wisconsin company that has trained a group of its employees to rescue co-workers who might have trouble in confined spaces. The confined-space rescue team, a 32-member group of volunteers at International Paper's Thilmany Mill in Kaukauna, Wisconsin, has operated since 1997. Requirements for teams like this one are defined in OSHA regulations.

OSHA also requires that, among other things, employers make sure that:

- the hazards of confined spaces in their workplaces are evaluated,
- safety procedures are in place, and
- proper hazard information is transmitted to all affected workers.

For more safety information and OSHA requirements visit the Web site at [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov).