

Confined Spaces Policy

Title:

Confined Spaces Policy (Estates & Facilities)

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Version Control

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May 2025	Estates Assurance Manager/Assurance Lead	v0.1-4	New policy under development
Nov 2025	Estates Assurance Manager/Assurance Lead	v1.0	Approved by the Policy Approval Group

Executive Summary

NHS Lothian acknowledges the requirement to have measures in place to effectively manage confined spaces as part of its responsibility as an employer for providing a safe working environment for its employees and others affected by its work.

This policy will help NHS Lothian to reinforce its commitment to the health, safety, and welfare of its employees and stakeholders and ensure measures are in place to comply with current legislation and guidance including:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Confined Spaces Regulations 1997
- Health & Safety Executive, Safe Work in Confined Spaces, Approved Code of Practice L101.
- Scottish Health Technical Memorandum SHTM 08-07.

Implement operating procedures to define how effective management of confined spaces are to be achieved. Provide adequate training and awareness information to employees who work in confined spaces, or manage/supervise those who do, relevant to their level of responsibility.

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1.0 Purpose

This policy is required to set out the duties and responsibilities necessary to ensure safety and compliance regarding all aspects of work involving confined spaces. This policy will have an accompanying operating procedure document, which should be read in conjunction with this document.

2.0 Policy statement

The aims of this policy are:

- To ensure that all persons responsible for the management and operation of any confined spaces, understand their roles and carry out their duties in compliance with [The Confined Spaces Regulations 1997](#).
- This policy is to enable NHS Lothian to meet its obligation to protect staff and contractors from the risks of work in confined spaces, so far as is reasonably practicable.

3.0 Scope

This policy is applicable to all NHS Lothian owned premises and those where NHS Lothian services are delivered. It applies specifically to NHS Lothian staff who have responsibilities related to confined spaces, including Management, Designated Person, Authorising Engineer, Authorised Persons, and Competent Persons.

Examples of confined spaces in such locations could be ducts, vessels, culverts, tunnels, boreholes, manholes, excavations, sumps, inspection pits, freight containers, tanks, building voids, some enclosed rooms (particularly plant rooms) and compartments within them, enclosures for the purpose of asbestos removal, interiors of machines, plant, or vehicles.

4.0 Definitions

AE – Authorising Engineer

AP – Authorised Person/s

CP – Competent Person/s

DH – Duty Holder

DP – Designated Person

PIC – Person in Charge

PTW – Permit to Work

RP – Responsible Person

SOP – Standard Operational Procedure/s

Audit - the structured process of collecting independent information on the efficiency, effectiveness and reliability of the safe system of work, and drawing up plans for corrective action. ('Independent' does not necessarily mean external to the organisation.)

Contractors - all parties who undertake work for, or on behalf of NHS Lothian. This includes tradespersons brought in for a specific task or time period but not those who have an ongoing supply agreement with the Board.

Employees - all direct NHS Lothian employees and agency staff

Method Statement – A document outlining the exact process to be followed for a particular task to be completed safely. The statement need be no longer than necessary to achieve these objectives effectively.

Permit-to-Work - A written authority issued by the Duty Authorised Person for work to be undertaken in confined spaces.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - equipment that will protect the user against health or safety risks at work. It can include items such as safety helmets, gloves, eye protection, high-visibility clothing, safety footwear and safety harnesses.

Scottish Health Technical Memorandum (SHTM) – a series of documents which detail best practice guidance for healthcare engineering.

5.0 Implementation roles and responsibilities

5.1 Management

The Chief Executive and their nominated staff as duty holders are responsible for the safety of confined spaces on their premises. The Confined Spaces Regulations 1997 imposes duties on employers to comply with these insofar as they relate to matters which are within their control. These duties are in addition to the ones imposed by the [Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#). Management must formally nominate in writing a 'Designated Person' with responsibility for confined spaces.

5.2 Designated Person

An individual who has overall authority and responsibility for the confined spaces within the premises and who has a duty under the [Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#) to prepare and issue a general policy statement on health & safety at work, including the organisation and arrangements for carrying out that policy. This person should not be the authorising engineer.

It is the responsibility of the designated person to:

- Appoint in writing an Authorising Engineer (Confined Spaces) for all systems and installations for which management has responsibility.

- Review the AE (Confined Spaces) appointment annually to ensure their duties have been carried out in accordance with all relevant guidance and legislation including SHTM 08-07
- Designated Person to appoint Authorised Persons (Confined Spaces) on recommendation of Authorised Engineer.
- Agree any local variations from this guidance.

5.3 Authorising Engineer (Confined Spaces)

A chartered engineer with appropriate experience or an incorporated engineer, who possesses the necessary degree of independence from local management and is appointed in writing by the 'Designated Person' to implement, administer and monitor the application of confined spaces policies.

The Authorising Engineer (Confined Spaces)'s responsibilities include the following:

- Assess and recommend in writing sufficient 'Authorised Persons' (Confined Spaces) to provide the necessary cover for all systems and installations for which management has responsibility.
- Define the exact extent of the systems and installations for which each Authorised Person (Confined Spaces) is responsible and, where appropriate, any part of the system which is excluded from the Authorised Person (Confined Spaces)'s responsibilities.
- Maintain a register of all Authorised Persons (Confined Spaces).
- If necessary, recommend the suspension or cancellation of the appointment of an Authorised Person (Confined Spaces) and withdraw the certificate.
- Ensure that candidates for appointment as Authorised Persons (Confined Spaces):
 - satisfy the qualification, training, and familiarisation requirements.
 - can demonstrate competence, ability, and adequate knowledge of each system, installation, and type of equipment for which authorisation is sought.

5.4 Authorised Person (Confined Spaces)

The AP(CS) shall collate a confined spaces register, together with a register of keys used for securing confined spaces only.

The AP(CS) shall survey premises under their control and affix warning labels to doors of compartments etc warning of confined space. Where practicable, doors to compartments shall be kept locked shut using a key that is reserved for that purpose and not a generic key, and manhole covers shall be kept closed so as to prevent entry to unauthorised persons.

The AP(CS) is not in charge of the confined space entry. Upon signing the Permit-to-Work (PTW), the Person-in-Charge (PIC) assumes responsibility for the confined space entry.

The AP(CS) shall produce a site-specific safe system of work together with a risk assessment, listing mitigating measures, including but not limited to:

- Supervision arrangements.
- Competence, training and instruction of the workforce.
- Appoint in writing a Person-in-Charge (PIC) for each confined space entry, ensuring the PIC is competent and fully briefed on the scope of work, hazards, and emergency arrangements.
- Ensure that the PIC understands the conditions of the PTW and is responsible for controlling the work during entry.
- Atmospheric testing, specifically to check the oxygen content and for toxic gases.
- Purging of hazardous atmospheres prior to entry and the subsequent testing of the atmosphere prior to entry.
- The use of fans, blowers etc to provide a safe and breathable atmosphere.
- Rescue arrangements, including the procurement of rescue services from competent confined space rescue providers where required.
- Whether it is necessary to introduce fresh air into the confined space.
- The arrangements for escape breathing apparatus.
- Communication and emergency signalling arrangements.
- The lock-off of piped water, steam, gases, electrical and other services.
- A prohibition on smoking and the use of petrol-powered equipment.
- A prohibition on taking equipment into the work area that is not constructed to the required standard for a confined space.
- Fire precautions.
- Precautions against musculoskeletal disorders, such as time limits when working in cramped locations.
- Any personal protective equipment deemed necessary, for example, safety eyewear.
- Any other relevant permits, such as a hot works permit, taking care to follow the conditions as set out.
- Maintenance of a document centre for confined spaces.

5.4.1 When issuing a safety document:

- Explain the contents of the safety document to the PIC and confirm their understanding of the nature and extent of the work and safety precautions.
- provide any keys as appropriate

5.4.2 When cancelling a safety document:

- ensure that the declaration (clearance section) has been signed and the requirements satisfied.
- PIC/Contractor's Copy to be destroyed in presence of authorising officer.

5.5 Competent Person (Confined Spaces)

Individuals recognised by the Authorised Person (Confined Spaces) as having sufficient technical knowledge and experience to work safely within confined spaces and prevent danger and risk of injury. Competent Persons (Confined Spaces) may be employed by NHS Lothian or be contractors.

The Competent Person (Confined Spaces)'s responsibilities can be summarised as:

- Competent persons (Confined Spaces) shall use safe methods of work, safe means of access, and the personal protective equipment and clothing provided for their safety.
- Competent persons (Confined Spaces) when in receipt of a safety document, shall:
 - Be fully conversant with the nature and extent of the work to be done.
 - Read the contents and confirm to the person issuing the safety document that they fully understand.
 - During the course of the work, adhere to, and instruct others under their charge to adhere to, any conditions, instructions, or limits specified on the safety document.
 - Retain the safety document and (where appropriate) keys in safe custody and correctly implement any management procedure to achieve this.
 - When in charge of work, provide immediate or personal supervision as required.
 - Warn all persons as quickly as possible to withdraw from, and not to work in, the confined space concerned until further notice if a hazard arises, or is suspected, during the course of work which could result in danger. The situation shall be reported immediately by the competent person to an authorised person.
 - during the course of the work, adhere to, and instruct others under their charge to adhere to, any conditions, instructions or limits specified on the safety document.
 - retain the safety document and (where appropriate) keys in safe custody and correctly implement any management procedure to achieve this.
 - Competent persons (CS) clearing a safety document shall do so only after all persons working under the safety document have been withdrawn from, and warned not to work on, the equipment concerned. Where appropriate, they shall ensure that all tools, gear and loose material have been removed, guards and access doors replaced, and the workplace left tidy in a safe condition.

5.6 Person-in-Charge (PIC)

The Person-in-Charge (PIC) is an individual appointed by the AP (CS) to oversee and control the work activity within a confined space during the period of entry. The PIC has direct responsibility for ensuring that all safety measures and procedures are implemented and adhered to throughout the operation. Responsibilities of the PIC include:

- Pre-Entry Checks:
 - Confirm that a valid safety document has been issued and that all conditions specified are met.
 - Verify that atmospheric testing has been completed and results are within safe limits.
 - Ensure all required permits (e.g., hot work, electrical isolation) are in place.
- Control of Work:
 - Maintain continuous supervision of the confined space entry operation.
 - Ensure that only authorised and competent persons enter the confined space.
 - Confirm that all personnel are equipped with the necessary PPE and safety equipment.
 - Monitor compliance with the safe system of work and risk assessment.
- Communication:
 - Establish and maintain effective communication with the safety attendant and work team.
 - Ensure emergency signalling arrangements are understood and functional.
- Emergency Response:
 - Initiate emergency procedures if a hazard arises or an incident occurs.
 - Coordinate with rescue services as per the agreed rescue plan.
- Post-Work Duties:
 - Confirm that all personnel have exited the confined space safely.
 - Ensure tools, equipment, and materials are removed, and the area is left in a safe condition.
 - Report completion of work and any issues encountered to the Authorised Person (Confined Spaces).

6.0 Associated materials

NHS Lothian Estates & Facilities [Confined Spaces Standard Operating Procedure \(SOP\)](#)
[Confined Spaces SOP Appendices](#), including:

- Confined Spaces Register

- Confined Spaces Operations Record
- Confined Spaces Equipment Register and Information Record
- Confined Spaces Equipment Inspection Record
- Confined Spaces Key Register
- Key Tallies and Safety Signs
- Leptospirosis Warning Card
- Confined Spaces Risk Assessment Form
- Confined Spaces Safe System of Work
- Confined Spaces Permit-to-Work
- Sample Letter to Occupational Health Service
- Sample Pro-Forma to attach to Letter to Occupational Health Service

The responsibility for the approval of the above documents sits with the NHS Lothian Facilities Policy Group.

7.0 Evidence base

[Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#)

[Confined Spaces Regulations 1997](#)

[Health & Safety Executive, Safe Work in Confined Spaces, Approved Code of Practice L101.](#)

[Scottish Health Technical Memorandum SHTM 08-07.](#)

[Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 \(RIDDOR\)](#)

8.0 Stakeholder consultation

This policy has been discussed and reviewed by Estates Management, Partnership and relevant Authorising Engineer.

The draft policy was placed on the NHS Lothian Consultation Zone for a period of 4 weeks to give all NHS Lothian staff an opportunity to provide feedback/comment.

9.0 Monitoring and review

To ensure the maintenance and operational arrangements remain effective, the condition of confined spaces should be continually monitored.

The following arrangements should be in place:

- Checking the performance of the system and its component parts.
- Checking the safety logbook, permit to work and Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) report documentation.

- The safety procedures will be subject to an annual review with regard to safe working practices and the competence of staff for their assigned duties.
- All local procedures and performance data should be updated as a result of annual monitoring and auditing by the appointed Authorising Engineer (CS).