

DISASTER QUICK TIPS: CONFINED SPACE SAFETY

Confined space danger

Floods may create dangerous conditions in buildings called confined spaces. For example, water damaged and hazardous materials left behind may make the air in a basement or enclosed room hazardous. Also building damage may block entry and exits or expose other dangers.

A confined space is anywhere that:

- Has few openings in or out;
- Has poor air flow so contaminants may build up; or
- Could collapse or trap someone inside.

Examples of confined spaces include: storage tanks, pits, ducts, sewers, tunnels, underground utility vaults, pipelines and others.

Use care in any confined space

Do these things if you have to enter any confined space:

- Make sure the building is safe from collapse;
- Make sure utilities (electricity, gas, and water) are shut off;
- Make sure outdoor air is flowing into the space;
- Have a way to signal for help; and
- Exit immediately if any unsafe conditions develop.

Contaminated air

You cannot trust your senses to identify all hazards in a confined space.

For example, you may not be able to see or smell many contaminants in the air.

You also cannot tell if there is enough oxygen for you to breathe.

If dangerous conditions (airborne contaminants or low oxygen) could be present, special equipment is needed to determine if the air is safe.

If in doubt, do not enter

Never enter a confined space unless you are sure it is safe.

Do not enter a confined space to rescue others unless you are trained for emergency rescue and have the tools and equipment for the job. Otherwise, you could become the next victim!

Note: MDH has detailed fact sheets on these topics. See back page.



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MDH Environmental Health Contacts:**Asbestos**

Asbestos and Lead Compliance: 651-201-4620

Web Site: www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/asbestos

Carbon Monoxide and Mold

MDH Indoor Air Quality: 651-201-4601 or 800-798-9050

Email: health.indoorair@state.mn.us

Web Site: www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/air

Cleaning Up and Food Safety

MDH Food, Beverage and Lodging: 651-201-4500

Email: health.foodlodging@state.mn.us

Web Site: www.health.state.mn.us/foodsafety

Drinking Water**Public Water**

MDH Drinking Water Protection: 651-201-4700

Email: health.drinkingwater@state.mn.us

Web Site: www.health.state.mn.us/water

Wells and Well Water

MDH Well Management: 651-201-4600 or 1-800-383-9808

Email: health.wells@state.mn.us

Web Site: www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/wells

MDH Environmental Health Division Emergency Program Contacts:

www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/contactus.htm

MDH Environmental Health Flood information Web site:

www.health.state.mn.us/floods

If you require this document in another format such as large print, Braille, or cassette tape, contact 651-201-5000 or 1-800-657-3908. For deaf or hard of hearing TTY: 651-201-5797



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