

# DMM Safety Alert:

## Confined Space Hazards

As we enter the typical maintenance and repair season, the likelihood of working in a confined space increases significantly. Remember, a confined space is defined as large enough that an employee can enter and perform assigned work, has limited or restricted access and is not intended for continuous occupancy by people. This could include ditches or other confining excavations, bins, hoppers, silos, tanks and other equipment. Before entering a confined space, make certain you are aware of the hazards and are following proper procedures. Many companies have strict policies covering confined space entry, up to and including, entry by permit only. At a minimum, proper training must be given to those who will be working in confined spaces. This training should cover all possible hazards and how to address them. The following checklist is offered by the Virginia Division of Mineral Mining (DMM) as a place to start:

- Be sure that the atmosphere in the confined space is not hazardous or does not have the potential to become hazardous before or during work. Monitor the atmosphere for oxygen content and/or toxic gases, if necessary, and keep the area properly ventilated.
- Ensure that all equipment associated with the confined space has been shut off, tagged out, and locked out along with all power sources.
- DMM and MSHA (Mine Safety and Health Administration) require those persons entering a confined space to wear a safety harness attached to an attended life line.
- DMM regulation **4 VAC 25-40-2550** states: “No person shall enter an area where they are exposed to entrapment by the caving or sliding of loose, unconsolidated material”.
- Here is a link to a recent MSHA alert on the subject:

<http://www.msha.gov/Alerts/confined-space-entry-ha1109.pdf>

