
STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

1997 No. 1713

The Confined Spaces Regulations 1997

Citation, commencement and interpretation

1.—(1) These Regulations may be cited as the Confined Spaces Regulations 1997 and shall come into force on 28th January 1998.

(2) In these Regulations, unless the context otherwise requires—

“confined space” means any place, including any chamber, tank, vat, silo, pit, trench, pipe, sewer, flue, well or other similar space in which, by virtue of its enclosed nature, there arises a reasonably foreseeable specified risk;

“diving operation” has the meaning assigned thereto by regulation 2(1) of the Diving Operations at Work Regulations 1981(1);

“free flowing solid” means any substance consisting of solid particles and which is of, or is capable of being in, a flowing or running consistency, and includes flour, grain, sugar, sand or other similar material;

“mine” has the meaning assigned thereto by section 180 of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954(2);

“specified risk” means a risk of—

- (a) serious injury to any person at work arising from a fire or explosion;
- (b) without prejudice to paragraph (a)—
 - (i) the loss of consciousness of any person at work arising from an increase in body temperature;
 - (ii) the loss of consciousness or asphyxiation of any person at work arising from gas, fume, vapour or the lack of oxygen;
- (c) the drowning of any person at work arising from an increase in the level of a liquid; or
- (d) the asphyxiation of any person at work arising from a free flowing solid or the inability to reach a respirable environment due to entrapment by a free flowing solid;

“system of work” includes the provision of suitable equipment which is in good working order.

Disapplication of Regulations

2. These Regulations shall not apply to or in relation to—

- (a) the master or crew of a sea-going ship or to the employer of such persons in respect of the normal ship-board activities carried out solely by a ship’s crew under the direction of the master; or
- (b) any place below ground in a mine; or
- (c) any diving operation to and in relation to which the Diving Operations at Work Regulations 1981 apply by virtue of regulation 3 of those Regulations.

(1) [S.I. 1981/399](#); relevant amending instrument is [S.I. 1990/996](#).

(2) [1954 c. 70](#); section 180 was modified by paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 2 to [S.I. 1974/2013](#) and by Schedule 3, Part II of [S.I. 1993/1897](#).

Duties

3.—(1) Every employer shall—

- (a) ensure compliance with the provisions of these Regulations in respect of any work carried out by his employees; and
- (b) ensure compliance, so far as is reasonably practicable, with the provisions of these Regulations in respect of any work carried out by persons other than his employees insofar as the provisions relate to matters which are within his control.

(2) Every self-employed person shall—

- (a) comply with the provisions of these Regulations in respect of his own work; and
- (b) ensure compliance, so far as is reasonably practicable, with the provisions of these Regulations in respect of any work carried out by other persons insofar as the provisions relate to matters which are within his control.

Work in confined spaces

4.—(1) No person at work shall enter a confined space to carry out work for any purpose unless it is not reasonably practicable to achieve that purpose without such entry.

(2) Without prejudice to paragraph (1) above, so far as is reasonably practicable, no person at work shall enter or carry out any work in or (other than as a result of an emergency) leave a confined space otherwise than in accordance with a system of work which, in relation to any relevant specified risks, renders that work safe and without risks to health.

Emergency arrangements

5.—(1) Without prejudice to regulation 4 of these Regulations, no person at work shall enter or carry out work in a confined space unless there have been prepared in respect of that confined space suitable and sufficient arrangements for the rescue of persons in the event of an emergency, whether or not arising out of a specified risk.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1) above, the arrangements referred to in that paragraph shall not be suitable and sufficient unless—

- (a) they reduce, so far as is reasonably practicable, the risks to the health and safety of any person required to put the arrangements for rescue into operation; and
- (b) they require, where the need for resuscitation of any person is a likely consequence of a relevant specified risk, the provision and maintenance of such equipment as is necessary to enable resuscitation procedures to be carried out.

(3) Whenever there arises any circumstance to which the arrangements referred to in paragraph (1) above relate, those arrangements, or the relevant part or parts of those arrangements, shall immediately be put into operation.

Exemption certificates

6.—(1) Subject to paragraph (2) below, the Health and Safety Executive may, by a certificate in writing, exempt—

- (a) any person or class of persons; or
- (b) any type or class of confined space,

from the application of any of the requirements or prohibitions imposed by these Regulations, and any such exemption may be granted subject to conditions and to a limit of time and may be revoked at any time by the said Executive by a further certificate in writing.

(2) The Executive shall not grant any such exemption unless, having regard to the circumstances of the case, and in particular to—

- (a) the conditions, if any, which it proposes to attach to the exemption; and
- (b) any other requirements imposed by or under any enactments which apply to the case,

it is satisfied that the health and safety of persons who are likely to be affected by the exemption will not be prejudiced in consequence of it.

Defence in proceedings

7.—(1) In any proceedings for an offence for a contravention of regulation 5(3) of these Regulations it shall be a defence for the person charged to prove—

- (a) that the contravention was due to the act or default of another person not being one of his employees (hereinafter called “the other person”); and
- (b) that he took all reasonable precautions and exercised all due diligence to avoid the contravention.

(2) The person charged shall not, without leave of the court, be entitled to rely on the defence referred to in paragraph (1) above unless, within a period ending seven clear days—

- (a) before the hearing to determine mode of trial, where the proceedings are in England or Wales; or
- (b) before the trial, where the proceedings are in Scotland,

he has served on the prosecutor a notice in writing giving such information identifying or assisting in the identification of the other person as was then in his possession.

(3) Where a contravention of the provision referred to in paragraph (1) above by any person is due to the act or default of some other person, that other person shall be guilty of the offence which would, but for any defence under this regulation available to the first-mentioned person, be constituted by the act or default.

Extension outside Great Britain

8. These Regulations shall, subject to regulation 2 above, apply to and in relation to the premises and activities outside Great Britain to which sections 1 to 59 and 80 of the 1974 Act apply by virtue of paragraphs (a), (b), (d) and (e) of article 8 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (Application Outside Great Britain) Order 1995(3) as they apply within Great Britain but they shall not apply in any case where at the relevant time article 4, 5, 6 or 7 of the said Order applies.

Repeal and revocations

9.—(1) Section 30 of the Factories Act 1961(4) is hereby repealed.

(2) The instruments set out in column 1 of the Schedule to these Regulations are hereby revoked to the extent shown in column 3 of the said Schedule.

(3) S.I. 1995/263.

(4) 1961 c. 34; section 30 was amended by S.I. 1983/978.

Signed by authority of the Secretary of State

17th July 1997

Angela Eagle
Parliamentary Under Secretary of
State, Department of the Environment, Transport
and the Regions.