

Revised Code of Practice for Safety and Health at Work in Confined Spaces to take effect tomorrow

The revised Code of Practice for Safety and Health at Work in Confined Spaces (CoP) will officially take effect tomorrow (November 30). The CoP was gazetted on May 31 this year, and a grace period of six months was provided to allow sufficient time for the industry to understand and prepare for the revised requirements.

During the grace period, the Labour Department (LD) has strengthened its publicity and promotions, as well as education and training, through various channels such as the LD's website, the "OSH 2.0" mobile application, and a series of talks and seminars organised with relevant organisations to facilitate the industry's better understanding of the CoP's content.

The major revisions of the CoP include the enhancement of requirements for proprietors' or contractors' supervision on confined space work; highlighting the factors for assessing whether a particular job constitutes underground pipework; adding a detailed template on the risk assessment form and listing out the setting of an air-monitoring alarm; and an update on the Permit-to-work Certificate template. New requirements have also been added to the revised CoP, such as requiring proprietors or contractors to adopt technology to record videos at the entrance and exit of the confined space throughout the entire work period to enhance monitoring relevant personnel's compliance with the safety precautions.

Meanwhile, the LD has refined the mandatory safety training courses for confined space operations to enhance the industry's understanding of common risks and its ability to mitigate these risks, which includes updating the course content, extending the course duration and shortening the validity period of the relevant safety certificates so that industry personnel will refresh their safety knowledge more frequently and stay updated on new legislative developments. The revised courses will be launched tomorrow.

A spokesman for the LD said, "After the commencement of the revised CoP, the LD will continue to conduct surprise inspections at workplaces with confined spaces from time to time to review the relevant work processes and safety precautions implemented to ensure the safety and health of workers."

The spokesman added, "The CoP has a special legal status. In criminal proceedings, if a relevant person fails to observe any provisions of this CoP, that failure may be taken by the court as a relevant factor in determining whether or not a person has breached the relevant occupational safety and health legislation."

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For more information on working in confined spaces, or to download the revised CoP, please visit the LD's new thematic website

(www.labour.gov.hk/eng/news/osh_confinedspace.htm). Enquiries about the CoP can be made at 2559 2297.