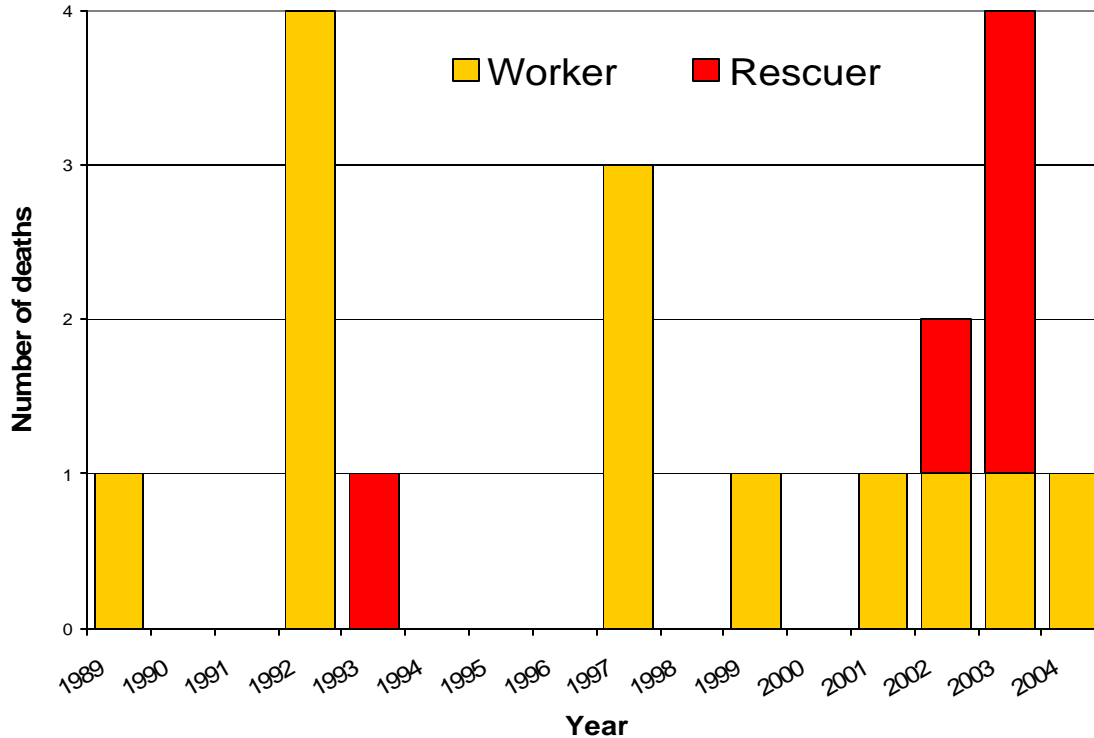


# **CONFINED SPACE ENTRY WCB BACKGROUND**

## **Workers' Compensation Board of British Columbia Confined Space Entry Deaths - 1989 to 2004**



- 
- 1989** Welder
  - 1992** Worker in juice storage tank
  - 1992** Worker wearing SCBA inside leachate collection system
  - 1992** Worker outside leachate collection system while acting as Standby Person
  - 1992** Worker buried by shavings partway inside beehive burner
  - 1993** Rescuer suffocated while attempting to rescue 2 workers from airless hold
  - 1997** Worker wearing SCBA spraying interior wall of concrete confined space, explosion occurred
  - 1997** Two workers found inside deaerator
  - 1999** Worker at bottom of a manhole
  - 2001** Welder inside hull of a barge
  - 2002** 1 worker and 1 rescuer in winery
  - 2003** 1 worker and 3 rescuers in barge
  - 2004** Worker in bottom of truck mounted fuel vessel

**There have been 18 deaths related to confined space entry since 1989 in British Columbia. Five of those who died were trying to rescue the original victims.**

***What is a confined space?***

A confined space is an enclosed or partially enclosed area that is not designed or intended for continuous human occupancy. It is an area usually separated from normal work areas by a small entranceway or some other obstruction.

Although a confined space is large enough for a worker to enter in order to perform assigned tasks such as cleaning, maintenance, or repair; often, the small opening used for entry can make escape difficult and can complicate evacuation or rescue procedures.

***What are the dangers for workers entering a confined space?***

Confined spaces are especially dangerous because of the hazardous atmospheres that may be present or introduced. The air inside a confined space may contain toxic contaminants or may not have enough oxygen in it to sustain life. Workers can be overcome by toxic air contaminants or oxygen deficiency causing workers to lose consciousness almost at once and die of asphyxiation in as little as four minutes.

Workers in confined spaces face the risk of being caught-in or struck-by equipment, falling and drowning, being entrapped by materials contained within the space, and breathing dust, gases, mists or vapours which can seriously disable or kill workers who enter.

Confined spaces are deadly – they rarely offer workers a second chance if these risks are present.

***What is the WCB Occupational Health and Safety Regulation for confined spaces?***

The Regulation states before workers are required to enter a confined space an employer **must** ensure the following:

- Workers and supervisors are trained
- All confined space areas of the workplace are secured against entry or identified to prohibit unauthorized workers from entering
- Hazards are assessed and safe entry procedures have been written by a qualified person before entry into a confined space including: cleaning and isolating the space, proper set up of safety equipment, monitoring for hazardous atmosphere and permits
- Each entry has air monitoring and safe entry procedures specific to that entry
- The safe entry procedures written by the qualified person include all required control measures including proper ventilation
- A standby person, trained rescuers, rescue procedures and equipment are in place before any worker enters a confined space

*....over*

## ***What is the WCB Lessons Learned initiative?***

Lessons Learned is a WCB initiative that uses the information learned from a serious workplace incident to share with our clients as a way to prevent the same event from occurring.

There are lessons to be learned from almost every work-related death in a confined space. If these lessons can be applied to all workplaces with confined spaces, it is possible to prevent similar events from happening again.

Recommendations from WCB accident investigations or Coroner's reports, may result in alerts, health and safety materials and public campaigns or may form part of the Lessons Learned initiative.

Confined space is the first campaign of the Lessons Learned Initiative:

It consists of:

- Awareness Booklets for:
  - Shipping and Transportation
  - Municipalities and Construction
  - Food and Beverage
  - Other Industries
- Confined Space Bulletin
- Stickers
- Pocket Cards
- Standard Practice Booklet
- Hazard Alerts
- Posters
- Workshops and Presentations

Information and resources for confined spaces can be found at **[www.worksafebc.com](http://www.worksafebc.com)**.

*Experience has shown that the majority of confined space fatalities could have been prevented if proper air testing had been done and adequate ventilation had been in place prior to entry.*