



MARINE SAFETY ALERT

Inspections and Compliance Directorate

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Washington, DC

Alert 08-13

CONFINED SPACE ENTRY DANGERS **Understanding Hazards**

This Safety Alert serves as a reminder to Coast Guard personnel and the maritime community of the potential dangers of confined space entries. During two recent inspections, Coast Guard Inspectors' gas meters alarmed, preventing a potential loss of life or serious injury.¹

In the first case, an inspector was on board a tank vessel to conduct a Port State Control Examination. In anticipation of the examination, the crew opened the hatch to the Freefall Lifeboat to let it air out. As the Inspector entered the lifeboat his gas meter alarmed and he quickly exited. Upon investigation, it was confirmed with ship's equipment that Carbon Monoxide had collected in the lifeboat. Wind conditions had been blowing exhaust from the main stack into the lifeboat. Although not a confined space by OSHA or Coast Guard standards, the risks were the same.



In the second instance, while inspecting the #1 deep ballast tank on a deep draft container ship, an experienced marine inspector was going to climb through a box-like structure formed by floors and longitudinals in the #1 bay, just aft of the collision bulkhead. The "box" had only two lightening holes. Prior to entering the first lightening hole the inspector put his 4-gas meter through. It immediately alarmed for low O₂. The inspector exited the ballast tank. While the ballast tank had been ventilated and was safe, the inspector failed to recognize that the "box" formed a confined space within a confined space and had not been cleared by the shipyard competent person.

In both instances, the proper use of a gas meter likely prevented tragic consequences. The Coast Guard **strongly reminds** all shipboard personnel and those associated with inspections, surveys or audits of vessels worldwide, that hazardous atmospheres are frequently present onboard vessels and pose a great risk to personal safety. Besides the use of a personal gas meter for immediate protection, all organizations should have policies and procedures in place that address accessing these areas and make available the appropriate safety equipment for personnel.

This Safety Alert is provided for informational purposes and does not relieve any foreign or domestic requirement. Developed by the Office of Traveling Inspectors, Washington, D.C. For additional information contact Commander Thomas Griffitts: Thomas.A.Griffitts@uscg.mil.

Photograph: IACS Confined Space Entry - http://www.iacs.org.uk/document/public/Publications/Guidelines_and_recommendations/PDF/REC_72_pdf212.pdf

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¹ The Coast Guard uses a personal meter that measures Oxygen, H₂S, CO and LEL.