

Hydro Tasmania

SAFETY AND WELLBEING COMMUNICATIONS

GREEN NOTICE

Confined Space Safety Observer Responsibilities

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Type of Comms	Safety message	Audience impact	Continual improvement

Event Description - Confined Space Safety Observer Roles & Responsibilities

A recent incident report identified that a newly engaged contractor assigned to the role of Confined Space Safety Observer during a power station outage lacked sufficient knowledge of the roles and responsibilities required for the position.

The site team had verified training records and provided the worker with an overview of the outage, the task, and the responsibilities of the role in the days leading up to the work.

However, shortly after work commenced, another worker observed gaps in the Safety Observer's understanding which included the Safety Observer entering the confined space.

Findings (What we learned / Challenges Overcome / Positive Outcome & Value)

While this incident has highlighted gaps, it also demonstrated some strong safety behaviours that are to be encouraged.

Positive practices observed included:

- Ensuring competence beyond formal licensing – recognising that holding a qualification does not always reflect depth of understanding in practice.
- Speaking up and intervening early - Not walking past unsafe acts and stopping work when things don't feel right.



The investigation also identified that the Safety Observer role is applied inconsistently across individuals and sites. This variability presents an opportunity to revisit the role requirements and strengthen clarity, capability and consistency in how the role is performed.

Actions for leaders, employees and contractors (Expectation for adoption of learnings)

Leaders/WHS Reps - In your next team meeting, toolbox, or pre-start, facilitate a discussion using the [Hydro Tasmania Confined Space procedure](#) (note the Safety Observer requirements on page 9):

1. Reflect on and share examples of work you have seen that were an example of excellent practice.
2. Discuss opportunities to improve the way this role is enacted as a team and commit to lifting capability and consistency.
3. Use this topic as your teams next focus area when carrying out Safety Interactions to encourage conversation, test understanding and create an uplift in knowledge and practice.
4. For targeted training/information, auditing, or general advice please contact the WHS team.