

## Fields End Consulting Limited

### Confined Spaces Medical Fitness Criteria

#### Medical Principle

The medical fitness requirement in this document applies to anyone whose duties require them to work in confined spaces. A confined space is a place which is substantially enclosed (though not always entirely), and where serious injury can occur from hazardous substances or conditions within the space or nearby (e.g. lack of oxygen).

#### Medical Fitness Criteria

Condition:	Fitness Criteria
Asthma or impairment of breathing	Lung function tests $\geq$ 80% (80% in FEV, 80% in FVC & 70% in FEV 1%).
Back/knee/foot/neck or any joint problems	No recent history of locking joints, full normal range of movement, no chronic discomfort which might impair escape or movement in cramped spaces.
Raised blood pressure	Controlled hypertension: BP $\leq$ 150/100.
Epilepsy	No fits for two years on or off medication (nocturnal fits excluded).
Eyesight problems not corrected by glasses or contact lenses	6/12 or better in both eyes. Near vision N5
Problems with hearing	Able to hear gas monitor alarm, can use telephone.
Diabetes	Adequately controlled on insulin or diet (no hypoglycaemic episodes in last two years).
Mental illness, including depression	No untreated or unresolved depression, any psychotic illness.
A fear of being in an enclosed space	No claustrophobia producing physical symptoms or history of having to leave confined space precipitously.
Skin problems	No persistent or frequently recurrent exfoliative condition.
Regular medication	No medication impairing attention or consciousness.

Meeting the medical fitness criteria's in this document indicates that at the time of the medical the individual is medically fit to perform the relevant job role e.g. working in confined spaces. It shall not be assumed that the person

concerned is fit if a condition has changed and the individual has not informed both employer and medical provider.

Medical assessments to meet the fitness criteria's of this document shall be carried out by a competent Nurse under the supervision of an Occupational Health Physician.

Where an individual does not meet all of the medical fitness criteria's set out in this document a decision will be made regarding their suitability to work in confined spaces by taking the following steps:

- The medical provider will take into consideration all aspects of duties and medical history;
- A job description and/or a risk assessment must be provided in order that fitness for work can be properly assessed by medical staff.

### **Frequency of Medical Assessment**

Medical assessment is to be undertaken prior to any individual embarking on working in confined spaces and:

Up to the age of 35 once every 5 years

36 – 45 year of age once every 2 years

46 years and above once every year

If clinically indicated, such as in those persons with chronic but no disqualifying conditions, the competent assessor may consider issuing a medical certificate for a shorter period of validity and recommend increasing the frequency of periodic assessments.

Where there is doubt about an individual's ongoing medical fitness for working in confined spaces a further assessment may be arranged.

### **Certification of Medical Assessment**

Confirmation of the outcome of the fitness criteria will be by certification from the medical provider. Individuals will be found fit if the fitness criteria can be met, or at the discretion of the Occupational Health Physician, having taken into account the risk assessment a restricted medical certificate may be issued.

### **Referral**

Should the individual initially fail to meet the medical fitness criteria a suspension from working in confined spaces may be necessary until further medical documentation is obtained by the Occupational Health Nurse in the first instance.

Where the Occupational Health Nurse is unable to establish that the individual meets the medical fitness criteria the case will be referred for review to an Occupational Health Physician.

The individual will be temporarily removed from working in confined spaces duties pending the results of the Occupational Health Physician's review.

Upon an individual meeting the medical fitness criteria, the provider will issue a Pass certificate.

If the individual cannot meet the medical fitness criteria set out in this document, a Fail certificate or a certificate indicating the fitness criteria they can achieve will be issued by the medical provider.

### **Continued Medical Assessment**

It is the responsibility of the employer to ensure (for audit purposes) that all employees hold a valid medical certificate.

It is the responsibility of the individual to ensure they hold a valid medical certificate at all times.

Individuals or employers will be required to arrange for the medical assessment to be undertaken prior to the expiry date as stated on the medical certificate.

If an individual has reason to believe that their fitness for working in confined spaces may be impaired they must inform the person responsible for safety in their workplace. If there is any doubt as to a person's fitness the individual should not resume or continue working in confined spaces until medical advice has been sought.

Whenever a significant change in health or working practice occurs with potential to compromise an employee's ability to carry tasks safely, advice should be sought from a medical provider in order to determine whether a further health assessment is appropriate. This may be particularly important when taking medication or following an accident, injury or period of absence attributed to sickness and is applicable to both physical and mental health problems.

### **Medical Assessment Parameters**

#### **Overview**

As a minimum the following areas shall be examined:

1. General health
2. Vision
3. Hearing
4. Physical stamina and strength
5. Body Mass
6. General balance and flexibility
7. Neurological disorders including epilepsy

The examiner will pay special attention to the following:

1. Diabetes
2. Asthma/impairment in breathing
3. Psychological problems
4. Claustrophobia
5. Skin problems
6. Medication

## General Health

The modern industrial environment requires that to work in confined spaces safely, competently and productively, those engaged in such work have an appropriate attitude, aptitude, physical capability and training.

Candidates should be physically fit and free from any disability that may prevent them from working safely. They should ensure that they have an adequate criteria of fitness, are physically able to perform the tasks expected of them in terms of strength, agility and co-ordination and are able to withstand the stresses of the work environment.

Where fitness is in question candidates will be assessed on an individual basis, taking into account any relevant medical information (***Obtained via a Health Questionnaire completed prior to the physical assessment***).

Consideration will be given to making reasonable adjustments for those with disabilities.

Personnel may not be permitted to work in confined spaces if they are suffering from any of the following medical conditions:

- Severe upper and lower respiratory tract infections
- Mental disorders / phobias e.g. claustrophobia
- Conditions that limit mobility
- Conditions affecting sense organs and effective communications

Persons will not be permitted to work in confined spaces if they are suffering from medical conditions or undergoing any medical treatment likely to cause:

- impairment of awareness or concentration
- fits or blackouts
- sudden incapacity or loss of consciousness
- visual or hearing impairment of a temporary or transient nature
- giddiness or impairment of balance or co-ordination
- Limitation of mobility

Individuals suffering from and/or are being treated for any of the following must undergo additional medical assessment and may be asked to produce relevant medical documentation:

- high blood pressure
- heart disease/chest pain
- respiratory disease
- diabetes
- epilepsy
- psychiatric illness/counselling

## Blood Pressure – Medical Fitness Criteria

Using the electronic or manual Blood Pressure monitor, take the individual's blood pressure and pulse rate. You must take into consideration the surroundings and situation the individual is in. For example, they may be suffering from "white coat syndrome".

Three blood pressure readings must be taken for each individual and recorded on the questionnaire. These should be staggered during the medical appointment to give the individual the best possible chance to relax.

The following procedures are to be adhered to when the individual's blood pressure has been taken three times and using their lowest reading still shows they have **raised blood pressure** (greater than 140 mmHg Systolic or 90 mmHg diastolic) at their medical assessment:

Reading	Nurse action with the individual
180 mmHg systolic or less and 100 mmHg diastolic or less	Request individual to visit their GP or Practice Nurse for further investigation. HCC to temporarily fail individual until satisfactory correspondence received
Higher than 180 mmHg systolic or 100 mmHg diastolic or higher	Request individual to visit their GP or Practice Nurse for further investigation. HCC to fail individual.

## Vision – Medical Fitness Criteria

Any eye disease or visual defect rendering, or likely to render, the individual incapable of carrying out their task efficiently and safely, is unacceptable.

The Visual acuity test will be carried out, initially without glasses or contact lenses, then with corrective eyewear.

Visual acuity should be 6/12 with both eyes open. Spectacles or contact lenses are permitted. A spare pair of spectacles should be carried. Unaided visual acuity should be 6/12 in the better eye and 6/12 in the worse eye. Peripheral fields should be normal to confrontation.

Near Vision should be N5.

Monocular individuals should be individually assessed after taking into account a specific risk assessment relating to their work and a pass may be issued subject to restrictions.

## Hearing - Medical Fitness Criteria

Hearing should be adequate to hear instructions or warning signals during normal working conditions outdoors. Subjects should be capable of using telephone or radio communication.

No pathological condition likely to cause unpredictable fluctuation in hearing criteria's should be present.

Hearing aid(s) may be worn to improve hearing.

## **Physical Stamina and Strength**

Individuals should be physically fit and able to cope with a full working day, and be free from any disability that may prevent them from working safely and efficiently.

### **Obesity – Medical Fitness Criteria**

Excess body fat may affect an individual's fitness to work in confined spaces. Those individuals in whom exercise tolerance, mobility or general health are adversely affected are unacceptable. Obesity should be judged clinically to ensure it is not such as to limit mobility or otherwise increase risks to safety. Individuals should not exceed a body mass index of 35.

Whilst there are exceptions to the rule, maintaining general fitness criteria's and having the strength to lift ones own body weight becomes more difficult with increased body weight.

The dimensions of the confined space should be considered against the girth of the individual being assessed.

### ***Equipment needed***

Height stick for measurement; scales and Body Mass Index chart

Height and weight is taken (Donor barefoot) and both measurements are cross checked against BMI chart and the BMI recorded.

### **Curling and stretching of each limb**

**NECK:**

- Turn the neck to the right and left
- Tilt the head/neck backwards
- Put the chin to the chest
- Put the ear on each shoulder - Do not raise the shoulder
- Ask if any stiffness or pain occurred – Look at facial expressions

### **LUMBAR:**

**Flex:** Ask the candidate to bend forward and see how low they can reach with their fingertips. If they reach their knees that is sufficient.

**Lateral:** Ask the candidate to place their hands to their sides and slide them down the side of their legs. Repeat on both left and right. If they reach their knees this is sufficient.

**Rotation:** Ask the candidate to twist their upper body to both the right and left. Keep the legs straight.

**LEGS:** Ask the candidate to squat and sit on their heels then stand to a rising position

Ask the candidate to sit on the floor with their legs straight in front of them. Then ask them to cross their legs and then and then ask them to get to their feet again. Observe how they manage this.

**Abduction:** Hip movement – Place the right foot on the inside of the left knee and vice versa – Push gently on the knee – See if there is any pain in doing this.

**Flexion:** Ask the candidate to stand – Ask them to put their foot to their knee (balancing on one leg) – Push gently on the knee – See the reaction.

#### **ARMS:**

**Abduction:** Ask the candidate to abduct their right arm in an arc shape towards the ceiling. A full 180 degrees should be possible. Repeat this on the left arm

**Flexion:** Ask the candidate to place their right hand in the small of their back above their belt and then on the nape of their neck below their collar. Repeat this on the left arm.

Please assess to see if there is any stiffness or pain when any of these stretches are performed. You must ask them after each test and react to their facial expressions.

#### **Medication**

Fitness to work in confined spaces may be impaired temporarily by the effects of some medicines which can produce drowsiness, ataxia and impaired vision, co-ordination, judgement and reaction times. The hazardous nature of working in confined spaces makes these medications inadvisable. Operators should seek advice from their family doctor, pharmacist or medical advisor about the potential effects of any medication on their fitness for work and should notify their employer if there is a risk that safe performance might be affected.