

18. Roles and Responsibilities

What is the difference between a person with adequate knowledge, training and experience, a competent worker, and a competent person?

In the context of confined spaces, the two phrases, “person with adequate knowledge, training and experience” and “competent worker” should be considered synonymous. The first term is used in the confined space provisions of the [Regulations for Industrial Establishments \(Reg.851\)](#), [Mines and Mining Plants \(Reg.854\)](#), Health Care and Residential Facilities (O.Reg. 67/93) and [Confined Spaces \(O. Reg. 632/05\)](#). The second term is used in the [Regulation for Construction Projects \(O.Reg. 213/91\)](#).

A person with adequate knowledge, training and experience or a competent worker can include a worker, a supervisor, a consultant, or anyone who has, in addition to the “academic” knowledge of the task at hand, a hands-on knowledge in safely performing the work, a knowledge of the associated hazards, the possible controls, and the legal requirements in order to enact the necessary controls to protect the health and safety of the workers in and about the confined space. In other words, this person or persons, (as it may be a group of people), must be able to perform the specific task or tasks adequately.

A “**competent worker**” is defined in the construction regulation, in relation to specific work--in this case it would be related to the confined space:

“competent worker”, in relation to specific work, means a worker who,

1. *(a) is qualified because of knowledge, training and experience to perform the work,*
2. *(b) is familiar with the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) and with the provisions of the regulations that apply to the work, and*
3. *(c) has knowledge of all potential or actual danger to health or safety in the work;*

A **“competent person”** is different from a person having “adequate knowledge, training, and experience” or from a “competent worker”. There is an added responsibility of also having “to organize the work”, which usually is associated with a supervisor’s responsibility. The term “competent person” is defined in the OHSA as follows:

“competent person” means a person who,

1. *(a) is qualified because of knowledge, training and experience to organize the work and its performance,*
2. *(b) is familiar with this Act and the regulations that apply to the work, and*
3. *(c) has knowledge of any potential or actual danger to health or safety in the workplace;*

While a supervisor may have had a role in organizing the work, he or she may not necessarily be competent to carry out the specific task or tasks.

A competent person is required for:

- Developing and implementing the confined space plan
- Verification that the entry permit continues to comply with the plan, prior to the start of each shift (and before first, initial entry).

Persons with adequate knowledge, training, and experience or competent workers (for Construction) would be the ones called upon to:

- Carry out an adequate assessment of the hazards in the confined space before any worker enters the confined space
- Sign and date the assessment and provide it to the employer
- Conduct the training of workers before they are allowed to enter the confined space
- Inspect the rescue equipment to ensure it is in good working order
- Perform adequate tests as often as necessary to ensure that acceptable atmospheric levels are maintained in the confined space, in accordance with the relevant plan.
- Inspect the personal protective equipment used by a worker entering the confined space

What are the rights of the joint health and safety committee or health and safety representative on a construction project?

The JHSC or health and safety representative has a right to the following documents relating to confined space:

- a copy of coordination document,
- a copy of the program
- a copy of the assessment when requested,

- worker training records

What are the rights and responsibilities of the joint health and safety committee or health and safety representative in a workplace, except a construction project?

The JHSC or health and safety representative has a right to the following documents relating to confined spaces:

- a copy of coordination document
- a copy of the program
- a copy of assessment, when requested

The JHSC or health and safety representative also has the following consultation rights:

- Be consulted by the employer with regard to the development and maintenance of the confined space program
- Be consulted in regard to the development of worker training
- Be consulted by the employer, with regard to reviewing the confined space training regularly, on an annual basis, as well as whenever there is a change in circumstances.

What are the duties of an attendant?

An attendant is a worker who is trained in the hazards of confined spaces and whose primary responsibility is to monitor and assist the workers in the confined space.

Assistance includes maintaining communication with the workers via an adequate communication system, calling for emergency rescue, providing confined space workers with fresh air packs and other personal protective equipment.

The attendant is not to enter the confined space, and his/her location and activities will be determined by the hazard assessment and the resulting confined space plan.

Where does the attendant have to be located?

The attendant has to be located outside and near the entrance of the confined space. As well he/she must be in constant communication with the workers inside the space and able to immediately summon a rescue response should it be required.

Can the attendant perform any other work while being the attendant?

Only if that work does not impede the attendant's duties.

What is meant by an attendant being "in constant communication with all workers inside the confined space"?

The attendant must be able to send and receive information to and from the workers inside the confined space in order to perform the duties of the attendant. How that is achieved is not specified; therefore, communications may be verbal or may include hand signals, radios, etc. The method will be determined by the employer and set out in the plan, based on the types of hazards identified in the assessment and the physical aspects of the confined space.

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