

Enclosed Space Fatalities - A united industry response



The fourth Enclosed Space Entry – Joint Industry Workshop took place at OCIMF’s London office on 27 March 2025. The cross-industry working group drawn from leading maritime organisations gathered to identify measures to reduce or eliminate deaths in enclosed spaces onboard vessels.

Fatalities due to asphyxiation and/or poisoning in the shipping industry continue, despite numerous rules, regulations, and best practice guidance on how to avoid such deaths.

In the previous three meetings, the cross-industry working group’s review of prior enclosed space incidents identified operational, commercial, technical and training related issues as recurring contributing factors. This review also included an analysis of incidents to understand the relationship between vessel type, incident location onboard and the rank or role of the victims.

The working group agrees that the maritime industry does not need new procedures relating to enclosed space entries. Based on preliminary human factor analysis, it has identified the contribution of Performance Influencing Factors (factors that make errors more or less likely) to many of the enclosed space entry incidents. The working group is committed to deepening its understanding and sharing its learnings with the wider industry, with the intention of helping organisations identify and improve these factors to prevent incidents from happening.

The working group recognises that the maritime industry needs to come together to eliminate fatalities associated with enclosed space entry. Ongoing actions include:

- Develop and implement a standardised ISO recognised enclosed space symbol and advocate the same to the IMO.
- Develop and publish a booklet intended for maritime staff that addresses the human factors and highlights the dangers of enclosed spaces.
- Develop and publish training videos for:
 - shore-side personnel highlighting risks of unintended commercial and operational (time) pressure being put onto ship’s staff.
 - Non-mariner shore-based personnel coming onboard a vessel – highlighting potential dangers of enclosed spaces.

The working group encourages you to share relevant incidents or data by email to enclosedspaceaccidents@intermanager.org. Please include the approximate date, the ship’s name and a brief description of the accident. Information gathered will be kept strictly confidential.