



Permits-to-Work Safe Working Practices

Wherever there is a special need to co-ordinate hazardous processes, the employer should (in compliance with the obligations under s.2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974) consider whether those hazards would be reduced by operating a permit-to-work system. Some statutes, regulations or Council Rules specifically require that this be done. For example:-

Under the **Confined Space Regulations 1997**, no-one may enter a confined space, in which dangerous fumes are liable to be present, until the appropriate precautions have been taken to ensure that the space is safe for entry without breathing apparatus. Those precautions must include steps to prevent further ingress of dangerous fumes, the removal of sludge and other deposits liable to give off dangerous fumes, and the ventilation of the area once it has been tested and declared free of fumes.

A permit-to-work system may well be considered as an acceptable control measure in certain situations which come under the provisions of the **Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 (COSHH)**.

No plant, tank or vessel which contains or has contained any explosive or flammable substance may be subjected to any form of welding, brazing or soldering operation, or, to any cutting or similar operation involving the application of heat, until all practicable steps have been taken to remove the substance and any fumes arising from it, or to render them non-explosive or non-flammable. Any such tank, plant or vessel must first be allowed to cool before any explosive or flammable substance is re-introduced. Here again, a 'permit-to-work' issued by a responsible person, e.g. a supervisor, is a sensible precaution.

Under the **Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985** detailed working arrangements, or systems of work, need to be adopted for any work with ionising radiations to ensure compliance. If the work could result in a person receiving an over-exposure in a few minutes or less (whether under normal or abnormal conditions), it is preferable that the working arrangements be formalised by means of a permit-to-work system.

Duties to Contractors

If an outside contractor enters a workplace for the purpose of repairing plant or equipment that has contained, or may still contain dangerous fumes, or explosive or flammable substances, he must not be permitted to commence work until a responsible person has issued a 'permit-to-work'.