

Safe Maintenance

Saves Time >> Saves Money >> Saves Lives

Dangers
lurk in every workplace

Permits To Work in Isolation

1. What is a Permit to Work?

A permit to work is a formal written safe system of work used to control certain types of work that are potentially hazardous. The permit document details the work to be done and the precautions to be taken.

Permits are effectively a means of communication between site management, plant supervisors and operators, and those who carry out the work. It is also a means of coordinating different work activities to avoid conflicts.

2. Why are they important?

Permits to work form an essential part of safe systems of work for many maintenance activities.

They should ensure that maintenance work only starts after safe procedures have been defined and they provide a clear record that all foreseeable hazards have been considered.

3. When must they be used?

A permit is needed when:

- maintenance work can only be carried out if normal safeguards are dropped or when new hazards are introduced by the work;
- where a contractor's work interfaces with normal production activities;
- work on plant which must be isolated from the possible entry of fumes, liquids, steam or gases (including those from fire extinguishant systems);
- hot work which could cause fire or explosion such as welding, and entry into vessels, machines or confined spaces;
- cutting into pipework carrying hazardous substances;
- work that requires electrical or mechanical isolation;
- limiting the movement of overhead cranes;
- high voltage work;
- rescue arrangements for certain types of work.

Want to Know More? Additional information is available from the HSENI website www.hseni.gov.uk or via the helpline number **0800 0320 121**

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A 'confined space' includes storage tanks, silos, reaction vessels, enclosed drains and sewers, open topped chambers, ductwork and poorly ventilated rooms. Serious risks may arise from lack of oxygen, or hazardous substances.

4. Who controls them?

Permits should be issued, checked and signed off as being completed by someone competent to do so, and who is not involved in undertaking the work.

A responsible person should assess the work and check safety at each stage. The people doing the job should sign the permit to show that they understand the risks and precautions necessary.

5. Key Points

- The permit system should have a written protocol stating system parameters, isolation procedures and responsibilities;
- It should make clear work should be done from outside as much as possible;
- A person should not issue a permit to themselves;
- Copies of Permits should be clearly displayed (at least both at the work site and recognised location);
- The permit should be clearly laid out with clear statements;
- Authorisers and acceptors should be able to demonstrate competency, experience and training in the system (and know when to stop the work);
- Work should be checked regularly to ensure relevance and safety;
- Monitoring checks on the system and individual permit checks should be carried out regularly.

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6. Legal Requirements

Legally a permit to work is required under the Confined Spaces Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999, the Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003, Quarries Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006.

7. Essentials of the Permit To Work Form

The permit to work form must help communication between everyone involved. It should be designed by the company issuing the permit, taking into account individual site conditions and requirements. Separate permit forms may be required for different tasks, such as hot work and entry into confined spaces, so that sufficient emphasis can be given to the particular hazards present and precautions required.

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Permit To Work Form

The essential elements are listed below.

If your permit does not cover these it is unlikely to be fully achieving its purpose.

- 1 Permit Title.**
- 2 Permit reference number** (and reference to other relevant permits or isolation certificates and documents).
- 3 Job location** specific as appropriate.
- 4 Plant identification** needs to be adequately identified (e.g. by plans, tags, diagrams or drawings).
- 5 Description of work to be done and its limitations** by competent person(s) familiar with task and site. May need a detailed method statement. Should clearly state who does what and when.
- 6 Hazard identification** including residual hazards that may be introduced (e.g. fumes) and hazards associated with the work.
- 7 Precautions necessary and emergency arrangements** competent person(s) who carries out precautions specified should sign precautions have been taken and understand the risks. Suspension arrangements (i.e. if work stops), need to be understood.
- 8 Protective equipment** (inc. PPE – specified).
- 9 Authorisation and Issue** signature (legible) by competent, authorised responsible person confirming precautions taken (e.g. isolations). Date and time duration of permit.
- 10 Acceptance** signature by competent person confirming understanding of work to be done, hazards involved and precautions required. Also confirming permit information has been consulted, communicated and explained to all workers involved.
- 11 Extension/shift handover procedures** signatures confirming checks made that plant remains safe to be worked upon, and new authorised acceptor/workers made fully aware of hazards/precautions and status of job. New time expiry given. Any limitations given.
- 12 Hand back** signed by authorised competent acceptor certifying work completed and safe condition for hand back. Plant ready for testing and recommissioning. Person in control of operational activities acknowledges that plant has been returned to the control of production staff.
- 13 Cancellation** certifying work tested and plant satisfactorily recommissioned. Record kept.

Signatures
(names must be legible)

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- GIVE THEM PROPER
ATTENTION**

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