OPS-01 (v2) – Enclosed / Confined Space Entry – Vessel Assurance Procedure (2026)

Version: 2.0

Issue Date: 2026

Review Cycle: Every 3 years

Document Owner: Harbour Master

1. PURPOSE

This procedure ensures that the Port of Sunderland is satisfied that any vessel conducting enclosed or confined-space entry has correctly planned, risk-assessed, tested, and controlled the entry in accordance with:

• Merchant Shipping (Entry into Enclosed Spaces) Regulations (latest revision)

• MCA Guidance on Enclosed Spaces

• Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seafarers (COSWP) – latest edition

• The vessel's ISM Safety Management System

The vessel retains full responsibility for the safe planning and execution of enclosed-space entry.

The Port's role is only to verify that the vessel has declared full compliance and that port-side interface risks are controlled.

2. SCOPE

This procedure applies to all vessels within Port of Sunderland jurisdiction undertaking:

Entry into any enclosed or confined space, including

tanks, holds, voids, cofferdams, double bottoms, duct keels, chain lockers, pump rooms, enclosed machinery spaces, or any unventilated or restricted-access compartment.

The procedure does not apply to operations under the control of a dry-dock repair facility, provided their approved confined-space procedures are in force.

This procedure also applies to Port of Sunderland personnel or contractors entering, or carrying out pre-entry atmosphere testing of, vessel dry cargo holds while the vessel is alongside, as described in Sections 3.3 and 7.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Vessel's Master / Operator

The Master is responsible for:

• Completing a full enclosed-space risk assessment, atmosphere testing, isolation, ventilation, communications and rescue arrangements in line with MCA and company SMS.

• Ensuring only trained and competent personnel enter.

• Ensuring appropriately calibrated gas-testing equipment is used.

• Ensuring a rescue plan and standby personnel are in place.

• Submitting the Port Enclosed-Space Entry Declaration Form prior to entry.

• Notifying Harbour Control on VHF Ch. 14 of:

– start of entry,

– suspension,

– completion.

3.2 Port of Sunderland

The Port will:

• Receive and check the Master's Declaration Form, ensuring:

– all required elements are declared to be in place, and

– any port-side interface risks are controlled.

• Approve the entry, approve with conditions, or refuse.

• Maintain oversight of port-side safety conditions (traffic, weather, operations).

• Retain forms for 5 years.

The Port does not undertake atmosphere testing, risk assessment, or technical supervision of enclosed-space entry; these remain the sole responsibility of the vessel, **except where Port of Sunderland Cargo Operations carry out pre-entry atmosphere testing and/or entry into dry cargo holds under the control of the Cargo Manager in accordance with Sections 3.3 and 7.**

3.3 Cargo Manager – Dry Cargo Holds (Port Personnel)

Where Port of Sunderland personnel or contractors, under the control of Cargo Operations, undertake pre-entry atmosphere testing, inspection, or entry into a vessel's dry cargo hold while the vessel is alongside, the Cargo Manager shall:

• Act as the **Responsible Person** for enclosed / confined-space control for those Port-controlled activities in dry cargo holds.

• Ensure a task-specific risk assessment is completed for Port personnel activities.

• Ensure enclosed-space / dry cargo hold entry procedures for Port personnel are followed.

• Ensure atmosphere testing is carried out using calibrated equipment and results are recorded.

• Confirm that acceptable limits for oxygen, flammable and toxic gases are defined and met before entry.

• Ensure suitable ventilation is established and maintained where entry is required.

• Authorise, suspend, or cancel entry by Port personnel into dry cargo holds under this procedure.

• Coordinate with the vessel's Master to ensure:

– the vessel's own enclosed-space entry requirements are satisfied, and

– any Port entry by Cargo Operations personnel is fully compatible with the vessel's safety arrangements.

• Ensure that emergency response arrangements for Port personnel are in place, understood, and aligned with the vessel's emergency procedures.

• Ensure that all Port personnel entering dry cargo holds are trained, competent, and medically fit for enclosed-space entry.

The Harbour Master retains ownership of this procedure and overall oversight of enclosed-space standards within the Port's SMS.

4. PROCEDURE

Step 1 – Vessel prepares enclosed-space plan

The Master ensures all entry requirements have been completed:

risk assessment, ventilation, atmosphere tests, isolation, PPE, communications, rescue arrangements, supervision, training.

Step 2 – Vessel submits Master's Declaration Form

Submit to Marine Operations (email, hand delivery).

Step 3 – Port review

Harbour Master / Deputy:

verifies that the declaration is complete,

checks berth conditions, nearby operations, hazards (e.g. hot work), and

issues approval or conditions.

The Cargo Manager is responsible for dry cargo hold entry procedures for Port personnel (see Section 3.3 and 7).

Step 4 – Entry notification

Before entry, vessel calls Sunderland Harbour Radio – VHF Ch. 14.

Step 5 – During entry

Continuous supervision at the entry point

Continuous UHF/VHF listening watch

Compliance with all port-imposed conditions

Step 6 – Completion notification

Vessel notifies LPS Radio on completion of the entry.

5. Conditions for Port Approval

The vessel's declaration must confirm compliance with:

- Risk assessment done
- Atmosphere tested (O_2, flammability, toxins)
- Ventilation established
- Space isolated (LOTO/blanking as required)
- Competent personnel only

• Rescue plan in place with standby

• Communication established

• PPE appropriate

• Entry always supervised

• Continuous monitoring or periodic re-testing

The Harbour Master may refuse entry where:

• Nearby port operations make entry unsafe

• Weather/tide conditions pose risk

• Hazardous cargo operations are underway

• No adequate rescue capability is declared

• Declaration incomplete or unclear

6. Record Keeping

All declarations will be retained for a minimum of 5 years for audit and incident review.

7. Transfer of Enclosed / Confined-Space Control – Dry Cargo Holds (Port Personnel)

7.1 Scope

This section applies **only where:**

• The vessel is alongside within Port of Sunderland jurisdiction; and

• Port of Sunderland personnel or contractors, under the control of Cargo Operations, undertake pre-entry atmosphere testing, inspection, or entry into a vessel's **dry cargo hold**.

It does **not apply to:**

• Any other enclosed or confined spaces (e.g. tanks, voids, cofferdams, machinery spaces); or

• Dry-dock operations under a repair facility's own procedures.

7.2 Authority and Control

For the Port-controlled activities described in 7.1:

• Day-to-day control of enclosed-space entry for Port personnel in dry cargo holds is **delegated by the Harbour Master to the Cargo Manager**, who acts as the **Responsible Person** under this procedure.

• The Harbour Master retains:

– Ownership of OPS-01,

– Oversight of the Port's enclosed-space standards, and

– The right to intervene, suspend, or prohibit Port-controlled entry where safety may be compromised.

• The vessel's Master retains full responsibility for the safety of the vessel and for any enclosed-space entry undertaken by the ship's crew in accordance with the vessel's own SMS.

Port personnel shall not enter a vessel's dry cargo hold unless:

• The vessel's Master has agreed to the entry; and

• The Cargo Manager has authorised the Port-controlled activity under this procedure.

7.3 Cargo Manager Responsibilities (Alongside)

When acting under this Section, the Cargo Manager shall:

• Ensure that pre-entry atmosphere testing and/or entry by Port personnel is:

– Planned and risk-assessed,

– Coordinated with the vessel's Master, and

– Logged and controlled in accordance with Port procedures.

• Ensure that:

– Acceptable limits for oxygen, flammable, and toxic gases are defined,

– The atmosphere is tested before entry and re-tested as required, and

– Results are recorded and available for inspection.

• Ensure ventilation, isolation, and access/egress arrangements are suitable for the intended task.

• Authorise, suspend, or cancel Port personnel entry into dry cargo holds where conditions change or become unsafe.

• Ensure that rescue arrangements for Port personnel are compatible with the vessel's emergency response and that responsibilities are clearly understood.

• Maintain records of all Port-controlled dry cargo hold entries for audit and review.

7.4 Command and Interface // NEW

The Master always retains ultimate authority for the safety of the vessel. Any conflict between Port-controlled activities and the vessel's safety arrangements shall be referred to the Master and Harbour Master without delay.

Where there is any doubt, **entry shall not proceed or shall cease immediately** until the situation is clarified and agreed.

APPENDIX A – Vessel Enclosed-Space Entry Declaration

Port of Sunderland

(Master's Assurance to the Harbour Master)

A. Vessel Details

Vessel name: _____

IMO number: _____

Berth/Location: _____

Space to be entered: _____

Purpose of entry: _____

Expected duration: From _____ To _____

B. Master's Safety Declarations

(Tick all that apply – all must be "Yes" for approval)

I, the Master (or authorised officer), hereby declare that:

☐ A task-specific enclosed-space risk assessment has been completed.

☐ Atmosphere has been tested using calibrated equipment, measuring at minimum:

– Oxygen

– Flammable gases

– Toxic gases (e.g., H_2S/CO/ammonia)

☐ Atmosphere is confirmed safe for entry.

☐ Continuous monitoring or repeat testing will be carried out if required.

☐ The space has been isolated (valves, lines, power, pressure, cargo residues).

☐ The space has been adequately ventilated.

☐ Only trained and competent personnel will enter.

☐ A stand-by attendant will remain at the entrance throughout.

☐ A documented rescue plan is in place with rescue equipment ready.☐ Communications between entrants and attendant are established.

☐ Appropriate PPE/BA/escape devices are provided as required.

☐ Entry will stop immediately if conditions change.

☐ Harbour Control will be informed of start, suspension, and completion.

Master / Authorised Officer

Name: _____

Rank: _____

Signature: _____

Date/Time: _____

Decision:

☐ Approved

☐ Approved with conditions (below)

☐ Refused (reasons below)

Conditions / Comments:

Harbour Master / Deputy

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date/Time: _____

D. Notifications

Start notified to Harbour Radio (VHF Ch.14): Time _____

Completion notified: Time _____