

# SAFETY ALERT



SAFE AND HEALTHY IN ALL WE DO

19th DECEMBER 2011

## Major Injury Confined Space Accident

### What happened?

A Slovakian colleague working for Veolia VODA suffered severe brain damage as a result of entering a confined space to read a water meter. He had not used his equipment to check whether the atmosphere in the chamber was safe, which was later measured as containing 6 per cent oxygen.

Two water meter readers attended a water meter chamber some 1.8m deep (entrance shown below) to carry out a routine read of the meter. They had carried out an atmosphere check using a single channel oxygen gas monitor of the previous chamber and as the atmosphere for this was ok they assumed that the existing chamber was also suitable for entry and did not carry out a gas check. The first meter reader entered the chamber and the second meter reader was distracted for approximately 10 seconds and when he next looked into the chamber he observed his colleague slumped unconscious at the bottom.



The second meter reader then immediately entered the chamber to rescue his colleague, but had to exit quickly as he was unable to breathe. After failing to rescue him a second time he raised the alarm at a nearby farm. The emergency services arrived after 15 minutes and pulled the meter reader out. They attempted to resuscitate him at the scene and en route to hospital. Despite this and specialist re-oxygenation therapy in a hyperbaric chamber, the employee suffered severe brain damage which is likely to prevent him from working for the rest of his life. He had been unconscious for approximately 15 minutes in what was later measured as an atmosphere containing 6 percent oxygen.

### Lessons to be learnt/Action to be taken

Investigations into the circumstances of this tragic accident are still ongoing and any further learning will be shared. This safety alert has been drafted to highlight the dangers associated with confined spaces and the critical importance of following appropriate confined space entry and rescue procedures and to always use relevant equipment.

**Follow All Confined Space Entry and Rescue Procedures And If In Any Doubt Seek Advice**

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16<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2011

<b>Action required:</b>	
Brief to employees	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Brief to managers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Brief to contractors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No brief require	<input type="checkbox"/>
Display on local notice board	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Signed notification sheets required	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**We the undersigned have been made aware of the contents of this briefing.  
If we are unable to carry out the work safely, we agree that we must  
immediately stop work and inform our manager / supervisor.**

Date	Name	Signature

<b>Managers / Supervisors Signature:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
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**Continue on another copy for additional employees.**