

IPP029	Lift Pits A Restricted Access Area	Nov 2025
AEA	Service / Maintenance / Modernisation	Final Comments

Subject

Clarification on lift pits - defined as a Restricted Access Area. This Industry Position Paper (IPP) applies only to lift pits in Service, Maintenance and Modernisation sites.

Guidance is often sought from the AEA, on the clarification of lift pits, and whether they are deemed 'restricted access areas' under normal operating environments.

The view of the AEA OH&S Sub-Committee is that in almost all cases lift pits should be treated and considered as a "Restricted Access Area".

This view is formed on the basis,

That lift pits are areas that contain various mechanical, electrical and other hazards in which the lift industry has well established procedures and protocols in place (to manage and control these hazards), and,

That there are limited and few occasions when lift pits meet the criteria and need to be managed as a confined space, these occurrences occur only when conditions are introduced beyond the normal designed environment of the building and lift (or lift pit).

OH&S Committee General Information on 'lift pits'

Although not designed for continuous and permanent human occupancy, lift pits are designed for a person to access for work purposes frequently (adjustment, maintenance, service and repairs).

In most cases the lift would not be operational when access to the lift pit is required. However, there may be some tasks where the lift is required to run when someone is in the pit, but this is done under controlled circumstances with the lift on inspection control (i.e. slow speed mode) and not on automatic. The industry has specific protocols for these circumstances.

Lift pits generally have adequate ventilation and are not likely to be at risk from an unsafe atmosphere (one that does not have a safe oxygen level), harmful contaminants (including airborne gases, vapours or dust that may cause injury or are at risk from fire or explosion) or engulfment.

This is based on the fact that lift pits are generally in common spaces that are in commercial, residential, hospitals, shopping centres and some industrial buildings and settings that share the same ambient air of these settings, and therefore any risk from potential acute atmospheric hazards or other harmful condition in lift pits is unlikely and

issues would only arise when an introduced situation or emergency occurs e.g. smoke, fire or flooding.

Lift pits are designed or intended to be at normal atmospheric pressure while a person is in the area.

Under normal design circumstances lift pits have a ready and convenient means of safe entry and exit. In most situations this will be via a pit ladder, but some deeper lift pits (typically >2 m) may have access via pit access doors, which allows a person to walk in and out of the workspace.

Definitions

Restricted Access Area is,

- an area where access is controlled but does not have known hazardous conditions under normal operating conditions / environment
- enclosed or partially enclosed
- where access is limited usually via a key
- via authorised entry / trained technicians / industry practices/protocols
- an area designed to be worked in, has adequate ventilation, lighting and a safe means of entry and exit
- an area that does not have poor ventilation or hazardous atmosphere

Confined Space is,

- an enclosed or partially enclosed space
- not designed or intended to be occupied by a person i.e. not designed for work to be carried out within
- likely to be a risk to health and safety from
 - o an atmosphere that does not have a safe oxygen level
 - o contaminants, including gases, vapours and dusts
 - o fire or explosion
 - o engulfment

Note – A confined space is determined by the hazards associated with a set of specific circumstances and not just because work is performed in a small space.

Information from SafeWork Australia Code of Practice Confined Space November 2024

Summary

The AEA OHS Sub-Committee, views that in all cases in a normal operating environment, a lift pit be considered as a “Restricted Access Area”.

The reasons behind this are that lift pits are areas that contain various mechanical, electrical and other hazards, which the lift industry has well established procedures and protocols in place and that lift pits do not contain and are not exposed to issues with ventilation, contamination and/or engulfment hazards, unless they have been introduced into the normal operating environment.

Safe Work Procedures (SWP) and protocols to manage these electrical and mechanical hazards include:

- Licensed Electrical and Mechanical trades, trained as lift technicians undertaking the work.

- Safe Work Procedures covering de-energisation or LOTO (Lock-Out Tag Out) and/or the activation of 'pit safety stops switches' when pit entry is required to isolate electrical energy and prevent uncontrolled or unintended movement of equipment.
- Marked 'refuge spaces' in the pit area.
- Guarding and the marking or identification of moving parts and machinery; and
- PPE

The AEA expects that all members have Safe Work Procedures (SWP) and protocols (minimum listed above) in place to manage those hazards associated with a 'Restricted Access Area'.

This IPP should be used to by members to inform and provide advice to clients and customers.

Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU), owners etc. who have any concerns should contact their vertical transport maintenance or service provider for more information, alternatively contact the AEA.

Final comment

Version Control

Version	Description	Author	Date
V1.0	Draft	AEA OH&S S/C	1/09/2025
V1.1	Issue for Final Comment	AEA	1/11/2025