

SAFETY! ALERT!

29 August 2025



Securing Confined Spaces

WHAT HAPPENED?

On previous substation visits, while conducting Confined Spaces Critical Control Assessments (CCA), It was found that manhole covers were not secured. The issues have been addressed and the covers secured. This has highlighted a potential gap in understanding the importance of securing any access to a confined space.

Securing confined spaces is essential to prevent unauthorised or unintentional access and prevent individuals from exposure to: unsafe oxygen levels; harmful airborne contaminants; and risk of engulfment; and other potential hazards.

Transpower considers a confined space as 'secured' when one of the following physical measures are in place:

1. **Weight and Design:** Covers typically weigh over 40kg, making them difficult to lift without specialized tools.
2. **Locking Mechanisms:** Some covers include locks that require specific keys or tools, deterring casual access.

In addition to the above, consideration of the following:

- **Material Strength:** Constructed from robust materials like cast iron or steel, they resist tampering and forced entry.
- **Placement:** Often flush with the ground, these covers are not easily located or accessed without prior knowledge, and their design may limit the practicality of additional locking or bolting.

Understanding and applying these principles helps ensure the safety of personnel and the integrity of our critical infrastructure.

Access to confined spaces in Outdoor Switchyards (ODS) should be secured, even when located within restricted areas. The below are examples of manhole covers leading to a drain, sewer, or underground tank which may be considered secured against unauthorised or unintentional access:



Pictures 1 & 2. Manholes that are secured with special key and padlock

Picture 3. Manhole that is not secured, no lock installed

LEARNINGS

- Report any manholes or confined spaces that are not secured.
- Ensure that secure requirements are considered in new design of assets.
- Capture the definition of 'secure' requirements in our design or service specifications consistent with AS 2865:2009 Confined Spaces, which is now being reviewed by the Confined Spaces Working Group (CSWG).

Name	Steve Peake/ Edward Cipriano
Position	Principal Engineer/ H&S Practitioner
Mobile	021 244 6568/ 021 795 971
Email	Steve.Peake@transpower.co.nz / Edward.Cipriano@transpower.co.nz