

# Telecommunications Work

**Scope and Application** - This section contains requirements for telecommunications work performed in manholes and unvented vaults. OSHA's regulations covering telecommunications activities in confined spaces are found in 29 CFR 1910.268(o).

**Guarding Manholes and Street Openings** - Whenever the cover of a manhole or vault is removed, the opening must be immediately guarded by a railing, temporary cover, or some other suitable barricade to prevent an accidental fall through the opening and to protect employees working in the space.

If work is to be done in the vicinity of vehicular or pedestrian traffic, warning signs and/or flags or other traffic control devices must be used to alert and channel approaching traffic. Where additional protection is needed, barricades must be used. Barricades and warning lights must be used during night-time hours.

**Entry Procedures** - Before entering a manhole or unvented vault, the atmosphere must be tested for the presence of combustible gas and, where continuous forced ventilation is not provided, oxygen deficiency. When unsafe conditions are detected, the work area must be ventilated and otherwise made safe before entry is allowed.

Continuous forced ventilation is required while work is performed in spaces under any of the following conditions where:

1. Combustible or explosive gas vapors have been initially detected and subsequently reduced to a safe level
2. Organic solvents are used
3. Open flame torches are used
4. The manhole is near vehicular traffic and/or exposed to gas seepage
5. A toxic gas or oxygen deficiency is found

Ladders must be used to enter or exit manholes exceeding four feet in depth.

Where open flames are used, a test for combustible gas must be made immediately before using the open flame device, and at least hourly thereafter. A fuel tank, such as acetylene, may only be in the manhole while in actual use.

**Attendant** - A person with basic first aid training must be available to render immediate assistance if the preceding procedures do not adequately protect employees entering manholes or vaults, or if the worksite is jointly occupied by an electric utility. Examples of situations that would not be considered adequately protected include:

- a. Manholes where safety hazards are created by traffic patterns that cannot be corrected by the procedures included in Guarding Manholes and Street Openings
- b. Manholes that are subject to unusual water hazards that cannot be abated by conventional means.

A qualified employee working alone may enter manholes jointly occupied by telecommunications and an electric utility for short periods of time for the purpose of inspection, housekeeping, taking readings, or similar work if such work can be performed safely.