

# Department of Disease Control

## Weekly Disease Forecast No.278\_ Confined Space Fatalities (13 - 19 September 2020)

From the Department of Disease Control (DDC)'s surveillance system, during the past 5 years (2015 -2019) up to the present, there were 19 confined space fatality incidents with 2 – 5 victims per incident. Forty-three (72%) out of 60 victims died. Since August 2020 to the present, there had been 3 confined space fatality incidents with 8 deaths. The incident scenes were deep and narrow water-well with 2 meter-depth or over including artesian well, waste water treatment well and manhole. The incidents occurred mostly during the rainy months with frequent rainfalls (August to September).

The main cause of the incident was working in any space having limited openings for entry. The work mainly involves fixing or cleaning of underground utility vaults, pipelines and water pumps. The main cause of injuries was that workers usually do not recognize that they are working in a confined space and that they may encounter unforeseen hazards. Deaths also occurred among people who try to rescue victims by spontaneous reaction without any protective gears.



According to this week disease forecast, the risk of sporadic confined space fatalities may continue during this rainy season especially among rural people who usually go down to fix and clean their wells to prepare them for rain water storage.

The causes of confined space deaths comprise oxygen deficient atmosphere and toxic air contaminants atmosphere resulting from accumulation of gases such as carbon monoxide, hydrogen sulfide, sulphur dioxide, ammonia, and methane. Confined space injury symptoms normally include dizziness and unconsciousness or even deaths

The Department of Disease Control (DDC) advises people to prevent accidental deaths in confined spaces as follows; 1) survey and assess risky sources in communities, factories and work places, 2) install warning signs, 3) establish safety program, communicate and warn the risk of confined space injuries and deaths to the workers and communities, 4) provide safety devices and usage instructions in factories and work places, and 5) in case of confronting a victim, immediately call 1669 EMS medical hotline or 191 emergency hotline.

For queries or additional information, please call DDC hotline 1422.

