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Cal/OSHA partners with Oakland Fire Department to launch Confined Space Emphasis Initiative

Who: Christine Baker—Director, California Department of Industrial Relations
Ellen Widess—Cal/OSHA Chief
Mark Hoffman—Interim Fire Chief, Oakland Fire Department

What: Press conference to announce the kickoff of Cal/OSHA's Confined Space Emphasis Initiative, including demonstrations by the Oakland Fire Department of confined space training and introducing the Oakland Fire Department's new rescue unit

When: Tuesday, Feb. 14 at 10 a.m.

Where: Oakland Fire Department Training Center
250 Fallon Street, Oakland, CA 94607

Background: Last year, seven occupational fatalities occurred in confined spaces – this press conference marks the launch of a campaign to bring awareness to these hazards and address employers' requirements. Confined space hazards occur in multiple industries and employers are either not familiar with the risks of working in such spaces or do not follow proper safeguards. One such incident occurred last April in Napa at Ancien Wines, Inc. The assistant wine maker was transferring red wine from one tank to another when he was overcome by nitrogen and argon gases inside the tank. He was later found unconscious and unresponsive six feet inside the tank and pronounced dead later that evening.

Confined space hazards frequently claim more than one life: last October at the Community Recycling & Recovery in Lamont, California, one worker cleaning a drainage tunnel was overcome with hydrogen sulfide fumes. Another worker rushed in to save him and was also overcome. Both workers died as a result.

DIR, Cal/OSHA and the Oakland Fire Department are joining in an effort to ensure that California employers do everything they can to prevent serious injury or death as a result of working in a confined space.

