

# Training Before Things Get Tight

Working in confined spaces or tanks can be very risky—but risks can be substantially reduced by adhering to regulations and guidelines. Some regulations require staff to regularly receive theoretical and practical safety training. The Dräger Academy offers the relevant courses in a [MOBILE TRAINING MODULE](#).



Just an exercise—and yet participants sometimes get a little panicky.

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**IT'S JUST A DUMMY**—a “woman” model that weighs only 55 kilograms and is filled with granules. “But this dummy feels twice as heavy as your girlfriend if she weighed the same,” says Michael Bergold, a Dräger Service staff member in Hamburg, Germany. Bergold’s job is to provide theoretical and practical instruction on how to safely rescue people—even when unconscious—if they become trapped in confined spaces (rooms with poor air circulation that are surrounded partially or completely by solid walls). Both, theory and practice, have to be taught, and various regulations in regards to the different employer’s liability insurance associations (especially BGR 117) stipulate that such instruction and exercises be carried out once a year.

Dräger has had mobile training modules since 2005, and these modules make it possible to conduct either one or two-day training sessions (the latter for safety supervisors) directly at the customer’s place of business. Customers include power and waste water companies, or any in which some employees can only reach their place of work through a narrow entry way or a confined space.

## Protective equipment is a must

Werner Ochse, Dräger Business Development Manager for the Mining and Utilities Sector, helped to develop the mobile training module. Together with a team, Ochse created a system for providing everything he needs for a realistic training session. What’s more, he did so on an area measuring just ten by ten meters: “Course participants



What’s down below? Knowledge and practical training provide experience and ensure safety.

climb through a narrow hole, pass through a room that can be made misty or overheated when necessary, and then climb into a labyrinth of pipes to rescue an unconscious colleague—that’s the dummy.”

This generally takes about seven to ten minutes, as Bergold has discovered in numerous training courses. “Good preparation is also important here,” he says. The theoretical segment of the course involves a review of laws, regulations, stipulations, and general occupational safety information. It is in this theoretical area where he has observed an alarming lack of knowledge, especially at many municipal water treatment companies. This ignorance can sometimes be deadly. “Sometimes you’ll have employees climbing into underground canals alone and without any personal protective equipment,” Bergold, himself well over two meters tall, reports. “Those who don’t take a gas detector with them can’t even check for the presence of dangerous gases at the bottom of the space—something you need to do before entering such an area.” Although what he describes is not the rule, it’s also not the absolute exception. “The point is that ignorance is not an excuse; if some-

thing happens, somebody is going to be held responsible,” says Bergold.

## Three mobile units worldwide

Even though participants are instructed to bring along and use their own personal protective equipment, the module also includes everything from gas detectors to harnesses—all of which are provided to those participants whose companies still haven’t given them the necessary equipment. “Still, even when participants bring everything themselves, they often don’t know how to use the equipment properly,” says Bergold. Participants almost always set the belts on the harnesses too loosely, which can cause them to get twisted between their legs and even cause serious injury in a fall. A lot of participants also don’t really know how to use their gas detectors properly.

For this reason, the theoretical segment of the program provides the foundation for what will later be demonstrated and practiced in reality. “Our training courses also include discussions on less well known but nevertheless important things like suspension trauma,” says Katharina Nadolny from the Dräger Academy, who is responsible for

ensuring awareness of, and the proper response to, this issue worldwide. If someone falls and is left hanging in a harness or a belt for, say, 20 minutes, their bodies can suffer serious damage due to diminished blood circulation, for example. Only those who are aware of this can prepare by developing proper rescue techniques.

All of this is obviously very important to companies, as is shown by the fact that demand is now around three times higher than was originally anticipated. “We currently have two mobile units in Europe and one in Australia,” says Nadolny, who adds that she’s considering setting up a new one in Brazil. These units are not only used to ensure that personnel are aware of applicable regulations, but are also targeted at associations of smaller sewer system operators in specific regions, reports Ochse, as co-developer of the training module. Such associations organize joint training events at regular intervals. In any case, the existence of the mobile training modules means that ensuring employee safety no longer depends on a company’s size or location. For more information on this training module, see page 36.

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