The hazards include:

**Silos:**
- Lack of oxygen
- Poisonous gases: carbon dioxide and nitrogen dioxide (silo gas)
- Equipment entanglement

**Grain bins:**
- Grain engulfment
- Equipment entanglement
- Lack of oxygen, in some circumstances

**Manure pits:**
- Lack of oxygen
- Poisonous and explosive gases: carbon dioxide, hydrogen sulfide, ammonia, methane

**Water cisterns:**
- Lack of oxygen
- Poisonous gases: carbon dioxide
- Drowning

**Wastewater sumps:**
- Lack of oxygen
- Poisonous and explosive gases: carbon dioxide, hydrogen sulfide, methane

**Root cellars:**
- Lack of oxygen
- Poisonous and explosive gases: carbon dioxide, methane.

If you have any of these or similar structures on your farm (even if they are no longer in use), a FARSHA Regional Safety Consultant can help you make an initial survey of the hazards, and then recommend a practical plan of action.

Since its founding in 1993, the Farm and Ranch Safety and Health Association (FARSHA) has worked to make employers and workers aware of health and safety hazards, and to help you follow British Columbia's health and safety requirements as they apply to farm workplaces. FARSHA also provides on-site training, literature, videos, and other health and safety guidance.

FARSHA has other resources for confined space health and safety:
- Confined space warning decals
- Confined Spaces in Agriculture (booklet, to be published soon)
- Searchable Occupational Health and Safety Regulation and Related Materials (CD-ROM)

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**FARSHA Regional Safety Consultant**

Serious risks are being taken during confined space entries on farms. FARSHA is extremely concerned by these risks, and has put together educational and practical resources so that you can reduce the risks on your farm.
What Is a Confined Space?
To be defined a confined space in BC, all four of these conditions must be present:

- An enclosed or partially enclosed space
- Not designed or intended for continuous human occupancy
- With limited or restricted entry or exit (that could cause complications in first aid, rescue, or emergency response)
- Large enough, however, that a worker could enter to perform assigned work.

On farms, confined spaces include silos, grain bins, manure pits and sumps, water cisterns, wastewater sumps, root cellars, and similar structures.

Making Confined Spaces Safer

Many of these spaces can be changed, to make worker entry unnecessary – and impossible. FARSHA can provide advice on making confined spaces safer, for example:

- Adjusting work procedures, so people do not have to enter a space
- Adding inspection points such as sightglasses, so levels or conditions can be seen from outside a space
- Moving mechanical equipment to the outside of a space, so maintenance and repair can be done away from the hazards
- Building in removable panels or larger openings, so emergency access is no longer restricted.

Your first step should always be consideration of changes to make confined spaces safer. The goal is to take them out of the definition of “confined space.” They can then be permanently closed up, and marked with warning signs on the outside.

Confined Space Requirements in BC

As of January 1, 2005, farm workplaces in British Columbia now must meet all the applicable parts of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (OHSR). (The previous law, the Regulations for Agricultural Operations, has been incorporated as Part 28 of the OHSR.)

Part 9 of the OHSR is concerned with confined spaces. Key points of Part 9 include:

- **Identification** of all confined spaces
- Formal written **hazard assessment** for each confined space, prepared by a qualified person
- Written **entry procedures** for each space that address all hazards of the space, also prepared by a qualified person
- **Adequate training** of everyone with duties related to entry into the confined spaces (supervisor, entrant, stand-by person, rescue team members)
- A **workable rescue plan**, specific to the space, with equipment and trained people available.

A safe confined space entry involves: air monitoring (gas testing), ventilation, personal protective gear, emergency rescue equipment such as a harness, lifeline, and lifting equipment.

People involved will be: the entrant, a stand-by person, and trained rescuers.

What Can FARSHA Do to Help?

Your FARSHA Regional Safety Consultant (RSC) can do an initial survey of the confined spaces on your farm, and wherever possible, help you find ways of making them safer.

FARSHA will soon be offering new training courses on confined space safety awareness, and specific confined space entry skills.

FARSHA’s new booklet Confined Spaces in BC Agriculture – A Resource Guide is now available. It explains every aspect of confined space safety, and covers each of the OHSR requirements with practical examples for BC farm situations.

FARSHA has also published Dealing with Confined Spaces in Agriculture. This is a short introductory booklet, based on the material in the Resource Guide.

FARSHA can provide speakers for community events or commodity association meetings, to explain and answer questions about confined space issues.

FARSHA RSCs have display samples of all the equipment needed for confined space safety, including four-in-one gas monitors, harnesses, lifelines, and other personal protective equipment. RSCs can advise you on the right choice of respirator and other equipment.

The FARSHA office in Langley has other display equipment, such as a lifting tripod and rescue lifeline and winch. This equipment can be used in educational demonstrations.