

This Week's Learning Objective:

Working in a Crawlspace

Materials Needed for this Session:

A copy of "How to Work in a Tight Crawlspace" sheet for each attendee.

A copy of the hazard sheet "Crawlspace Safety for Home Inspectors" for each attendee.

Leader Notes / Training Outline

1. Review the "How to Work in a Tight Crawlspace". Encourage discussion. Each attendee should have a copy of the sheet to take notes.
2. Review the "Crawlspace Safety for Home Inspectors". Discuss any specific questions and job application.
3. Open the discussion to the attendees. See Leader Tips below.

- _____
- _____
- _____



Leader Tips:

Announce the learning objective: Our objective today is _____

Explain to the group why this topic is being reviewed:

- Prevent you from being injured
- Prevent property damage
- .
- .

Ask the **group to discuss** the subject matter and give input by drawing from their work experiences:

- Attendee to relate a personal story involving this objective
- Attendee to share something learned on the job involving this objective
- .
- .

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How to Work in a Tight Crawlspace

By an eHow Contributor

Many homes do not have basements and are built on slabs or foundations so that they are very low to the ground. When you have special projects to do, such as wiring or plumbing, the crawl space is so low and small, you can barely get in, much less do any work. Here are a few tips on how to work in a tight crawlspace.

Instructions

Difficulty: Moderate

1

Plan your project and the procedure out well before entering the crawl space. Know what will be involved and understand the procedure before beginning.

2

Use crawl space dehumidifiers to keep your crawl space dry so you don't have to deal with stale, musty air, structural wood damage and corrosion of HVAC equipment.

3

Get your tools and equipment ready and in hand before entering the crawl space. Most crawl spaces are not large enough to pull tools from a pocket or even a bucket.

4

Put a forehead-mounting headlight on before entering the crawl space. The bright LED headlights are small, lightweight and adjustable, and will leave your hands free for other tasks.

5

Do as much of the prep work as possible before entering the crawl space, such as any required testing, assembly or fitting.

6

Take breaks often. You will need to breathe some fresh air, stretch and move around.

7

Dig out paths to the important areas under the house or crawl space if the area is not big enough. Digging out specific areas is easier than digging out the entire crawl space. You may have to make these areas 2- to 3-feet deep, just enough to work in.

[Clean Crawl space](#)

Crawl Space Safety for Home Inspectors

A number of conditions besides the old saw "accessibility" or size of the crawl space opening should be considered carefully by the home inspector, electrical inspector, or anyone who is deciding if it is safe to enter a crawl area anywhere in a building.

Here is a list of some safety and health considerations that the inspector should evaluate before deciding to enter a crawl space:



- **Is there standing water** in the crawl area?

If so there is risk of electrical shock (if wiring or electrical devices are present).

There may also be a chemical contamination risk, especially in older buildings where pesticides may have been applied in the crawl area.



- **Is there excessive debris** in the crawl area? Nails, splinters, and possibly rodents may be in the debris in our photo at left.
- **Are there wet crawl area floors** or other surfaces? Crawling exposes a lot of body surface to the ground or other surfaces and limits movement. There maybe shock hazards or chemical hazards even if there is not actual standing water.

Beware also of evidence of structural collapse when looking at a flooded or very

wet crawl space. Piers are undermined, foundations may be collapsing.

- **Are there chemical odors** in the crawl space? If so there is an increased risk of chemical contaminants that could be hazardous. You should not enter such an area without proper protective clothing, respirator, etc.



- **Is there evidence of asbestos** insulation, especially disturbed, damaged, or deteriorated asbestos insulation?

Do not enter such an area without [protective equipment](#); take care that you do not track hazardous materials out of the crawlspace and into other building areas.

Often we find a crawl area in which the asbestos pipe insulation is not just hanging (photo at left) but has fallen onto the crawl space floor.



- **Is there evidence of mold contamination** such as areas of wood, paper, or other material covered with mold or mold-suspect material. Do not enter such an area without [protective gear](#).

- **Is there evidence of rodents or snakes or insect pests** in the crawl space? Rodent hazards include bacterial and viral and respiratory illness; there is the obvious risk of snake bites in a confined space, and more than once we've been run out of a crawl space by bees or hornets.

But since you're unlikely to be able to move rapidly to make an emergency retreat from threatening pests, crawl areas are riskier than some other building areas.

Evidence of pests may also suggest risk of improperly applied and unsafe exposure to pesticides.



- **Is there sufficient space** to enter and move safely in the crawl area. Review the OSHA regulations on entering confined spaces. The inspector or worker should decide if s/he a building area is safely accessible. Do not enter a confined space if you are working alone at a property. If circumstances mean you cannot avoid such an entry, be sure you carry:
 - A working cell phone that will function in the space
 - A spare flashlight
 - Appropriate protective gear
 - A camera to use for documenting conditions - it's easier than dragging along clipboards and pens.
- **Is there wet or falling or rodent-infested fiberglass insulation** in the crawl area? If so there is a high risk of mold or rodent contaminants that could present a fungal, bacterial, or viral airborne hazard. Do not enter such an area without proper protective gear. See [Mold in Fiberglass Insulation](#).



- **Is there evidence of risk of structural collapse** or even structural movement in or over the crawl area?

Look closely at columns, posts, piers, girders, joists, and perimeter foundations.

It is easy to become pinned or even crushed if you enter an unstable structure.