10.1 THREE-DIMENSIONAL COORDINATE SYSTEMS

EXAMPLE A

(a) Which points (x, y, z) satisfy the equations

$$x^2 + y^2 = 1 \qquad \text{and} \qquad z = 3$$

(b) What does the equation $x^2 + y^2 = 1$ represent as a surface in $\mathbb{R}^3$?

SOLUTION

(a) Because $z = 3$, the points lie in the horizontal plane $z = 3$ from Example 1(a). Because $x^2 + y^2 = 1$, the points lie on the circle with radius 1 and center on the z-axis. See Figure 1.

(b) Given that $x^2 + y^2 = 1$, with no restrictions on z, we see that the point (x, y, z) could lie on a circle in any horizontal plane $z = k$. So the surface $x^2 + y^2 = 1$ in $\mathbb{R}^3$ consists of all possible horizontal circles $x^2 + y^2 = 1$, $z = k$, and is therefore the circular cylinder with radius 1 whose axis is the z-axis. See Figure 2.

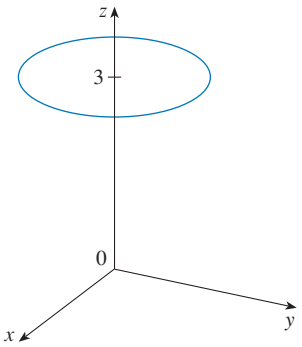

FIGURE 1
The circle $x^2 + y^2 = 1$, $z = 3$

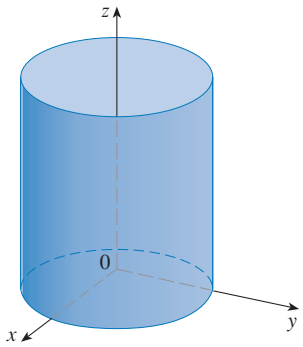

FIGURE 2
The cylinder $x^2 + y^2 = 1$

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