

TWIN STATE MUTUAL AID FIRE ASSOCIATION

SCBA USE & FACIAL HAIR

STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE

ADOPTED: May ____, 2022

TS-SOG-05

VERSION 1.03

1.0 PURPOSE:

The purpose of this guideline is to establish an Association wide policy for firefighters with facial hair and the use of Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA). This policy shall apply to all personnel operating on fire grounds, a hazardous area or training grounds if the potential to encounter hazardous atmosphere conditions that are Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health (IDLH) exists.

2.0 DEFINITIONS:

- 2.1 Facepiece – An integral part of a SCBA that forms a mask that covers the nose, mouth, and eyes and creates an airtight seal against the skin of the user.
- 2.2 Facial Hair – Hair that grows on a person’s face which could be normal daily growth after a shave, beard, mustache, sideburns, goatee, or other growth of hair on a person’s face.
- 2.3 Fit Test – An assessment to evaluate the proficiency of a seal between a particular size facepiece and the wearer's face by determining the amount of leakage, if any, that the seal permits.
- 2.4 Hazardous Area – Any location that may pose a safety or health risk to emergency personnel, due to the presence of products of combustion, an IDLH atmosphere, hazardous equipment or operations, confined space or the potential for any of these situations to exist.
- 2.4 Incident Commander – The individual responsible for on-scene incident activities, including developing incident objectives and ordering and releasing resources. The Incident Commander has overall authority and responsibility for conducting incident operations.
- 2.5 IDLH – Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health.
- 2.6 Safety Officer – A member of the Command Staff responsible for monitoring incident operations and advising the Incident Commander on all matters relating to operational safety, including the health and safety of emergency personnel. The Safety Officer has the authority to stop an unsafe practice or to remove firefighters from the fireground that pose a danger to themselves or others.
- 2.7 SCBA – Self Contained Breathing Apparatus as defined in NFPA Standard 1852.
- 2.8 Seal – The mechanical connection between the facepiece and the user’s skin that creates an air tight enclosure which prevents outside air from entering inside the facepiece.

3.0 RESPONSIBILITIES:

- 3.1 It shall be the responsibility of the Safety Officer, department officers, and firefighters to know, comply and enforce the intent of this guideline.
- 3.2 It shall be the responsibility of all firefighters operating in SCBA to maintain a tight skin to mask seal.

- 3.3 It shall be the responsibility of all personnel to know and follow the NFPA 1500 Firefighter Safety & Wellness standard (NFPA), the National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 29 CFR 1910.134(e)(5)(i), and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) regulations as it relates to the use of SCBA. All of the above, prohibit beards or other facial hair that may interfere with the proper seal of a SCBA facepiece.

4.0 PROCEDURE:

- 4.1 All firefighters without a beard or moustache and using SCBA, shall not have growth of facial hair of more than one (1) day or that which may interfere with a proper seal of the face piece.
- 4.2 All firefighters with a beard, moustache, sideburns or other facial hair that prevents a proper skin to face piece seal is not allowed to wear a SCBA. Regardless of what fit test measurement can be obtained, facial hair that comes in contact with where the facepiece is designed to seal with the face is prohibited with the use of a SCBA.
- 4.3 If facial hair is styled so no hair underlies the points where the SCBA facepiece is designed to seal with the face, then personnel may use a SCBA. Certain moustaches may meet that criterion.
- 4.4 Personnel who are in violation of this Guideline will be required to remove their SCBA and shall be limited to support operations in non-hazardous environments.

5.0 REFERENCES:

- 5.1 The National Fire Protection Association deals with this issue in NFPA 1500, Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety, Health, and Wellness Program. The 2021 version of NFPA 1500 states at section 7.16 the following:

“Respirators shall not be worn when a member has any conditions that prevent a good face seal. Nothing shall be allowed to enter or pass through the area where the respiratory protection facepiece is designed to seal with the face, regardless of the specific fitting test measurement that can be obtained. Members who have a beard or facial hair at any point where the facepiece is designed to seal with the face or whose hair could interfere with the operation of the unit shall not be permitted to use respiratory protection at emergency incidents or in hazardous or potentially hazardous atmospheres. These restrictions shall apply regardless of the specific fitting test measurement that can be obtained under test conditions.”

- 5.2 The National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety, in the NIOSH Guide to Industrial Respiratory Protection states:

“Facial hair that lies along the sealing area of the respirator, such as beards, sideburns, moustaches, or even a few days growth of stubble, should not be permitted on employees who are required to wear respirators that rely on a tight facepiece fit to achieve maximum protection. Facial hair between the wearer’s skin and the sealing surfaces of the respirator will prevent a good seal.”

- 5.3 The Occupational Safety and Health Standard Title 29 CFR 1910.134 states:

“The employer shall not permit respirators with tight-fitting face pieces to be worn by employees who have: (A) Facial hair that comes between the sealing surface of the facepiece and the face or that interferes with valve function; or (B) Any condition that interferes with the face-to-facepiece seal or valve function. (ii) If an employee wears corrective glasses or goggles or other personal protective equipment, the employer shall ensure that such equipment is worn in a manner that does not interfere with the seal of the

facepiece to the face of the user.”

Additionally, under the above cited standard, when discussing the fit test requirements OSHA states: “The test shall not be conducted if there is any hair growth between the skin and the facepiece sealing surface, such as stubble beard growth, beard, mustache, or sideburns which cross the respirator sealing surface.”

- 5.4 The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Z88.2-1992 entitled “American National Standard for Respiratory Protection” in section 7.5.1 of the standard states:

“A respirator, either positive or negative pressure, equipped with a facepiece (tight or loose fitting) shall not be worn if facial hair comes between the sealing surface of the facepiece and the face or if facial hair interferes with valve function.”

6.0 DEVIATION FROM GUIDELINE:

If situations at an incident do not fit within this guideline, the Incident Commander shall have the authority to deviate as necessary to perform a successful outcome and ensure firefighter and public safety.

7.0 ENFORCEMENT:

The Incident Commander and/or the Safety Officer shall have the unilateral authority to remove any firefighter from the fireground or scene who is not in compliance with this Guideline.