



# PRINCE GEORGE FIRE AND EMS

**Section: Safety**

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**Section No: 3.2**

**Date: March 1, 2016**

**Title: Respiratory Protection and SCBA**

**Authorized By:**

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**I. PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this guideline is to provide personal grooming standards conducive to the safe and effective use of Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), to be consistent with the Virginia Department of Fire Program's "No Beard" policy, and to guide fire and EMS personnel with the appropriate use of self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) at emergency incidents, including the use of atmospheric monitoring.

**II. BACKGROUND:**

To promote understanding of this policy, the following information is provided:

- A. NFPA 1500 -1997, Fire Department Occupational Health and Safety Program - NFPA 1500 clearly states in 5-3.8, "A growth of beard or facial hair at any point where the SCBA facepiece is designed to seal with the face shall be prohibited for members required to use SCBA."
- B. Occupational Safety and Health Standard 29 CFR 1910.134 – "...shall not permit respirators with tight-fitting facepieces to be worn by employees who have:"
  - 1. Facial hair that comes between the sealing surface of the facepiece and the face or that interferes with valve function; or
  - 2. Any condition that interferes with the face-to-facepiece seal or valve function.

**III. SCOPE:**

This guideline applies to all Prince George County Fire and EMS personnel, Volunteer fire/EMS companies and other organizations/agencies operating in Prince George County.

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## **IV. DEFINITIONS:**

*CO - Carbon Monoxide*

*IDLH - Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health*

*Incipient Fire - A fire in the initial or beginning stages which can be controlled or extinguished by portable fire extinguishers*

*NFPA - National Fire Protection Agency*

*OSHA - Occupational Safety and Health Administration*

*PPM - Parts Per Million*

*SCBA - Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus*

## **V. PROCEDURE**

### **A. SCBA USE**

1. SCBA shall always be worn as specified by the manufacturer and in accordance with OSHA 29 CFR 1910.134, NFPA 1404, and NFPA 1500.
2. Personnel with a beard or facial hair growth coming into contact at any point with the area of an SCBA facepiece designed to seal with the face shall not engage in activities involving the use of an SCBA.

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3. SCBA shall be utilized by all personnel operating in any environment where the atmosphere is potentially or immediately dangerous to life and health (IDLH). This condition should be assumed for:
  - a. Interior operations at all structure fires, wherever a fire has advanced beyond the incipient phase.
  - b. Any interior or exterior firefighting operations where personnel may be expected to encounter significant amounts of smoke or toxic gases.
  - c. Emergency incidents in which oxygen has been displaced.
  - d. Emergency incidents in which gas/vapor levels that may cause harm to a responder's respiratory system are present.
  
4. Personnel operating in an IDLH atmosphere utilizing SCBA shall work in teams of two or more (2+). Personnel must also maintain voice or visual contact with each other at all times.
  
5. During overhaul or salvage operations, atmospheric monitoring shall be utilized to establish that a safe atmosphere exists prior to discontinuing the use of SCBA. Any of the following conditions in the working area require continued use of self-contained breathing apparatus:
  - a. CO levels of 35ppm or greater
  - b. Oxygen (O<sub>2</sub>) levels of 19.5% or less
  - c. Hydrogen sulfide above 10 ppm
  - d. Hydrogen cyanide above 10 ppm
  - e. Flammability above 10% of lower explosive limit (LEL)
  - f. Continued presence of smoke from combustion
  - g. When instructed by the Incident Commander

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6. SCBA use shall not be discontinued until testing has been completed and the Incident Commander has advised personnel they may remove their SCBA.
7. Any crew entering an IDLH atmosphere must monitor their remaining air supply carefully and shall leave the IDLH while they still have sufficient air supply to reach a safe area.
8. If any member of the crew receives a low air alarm or has a malfunction of any part of their SCBA, the entire crew shall exit the building immediately.
9. After every use of a SCBA, the wearer shall be responsible for the following:
  - a. Clean and wipe dry the harness, cylinder and face piece
  - b. Fill all empty cylinders
  - c. Perform a detailed inspection

## **B. ANNUAL FIT TESTING**

1. Personnel using or having the potential to use SCBA shall participate in an annual fit testing performed in accordance with OSHA 29 CFR 1910.134.
2. Personnel shall achieve a non-leaking facepiece-to-skin seal with the proper sized mask.
3. Personnel will not be allowed to participate in the testing process if any facial hair growth comes into contact at any point with the area of an SCBA facepiece designed to seal with the face.
4. Individual members shall be accountable for compliance with this requirement.

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