



Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
National Institute for Occupational
Safety and Health - ALOSH
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NIOSH/MSHA Respirator User Notice November 1997

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) wish to inform users of the Portal-Pack[®] self-contained self-rescuer (SCSR), manufactured by Mine Safety Appliances Company (MSA) and bearing NIOSH approval number TC-13F-283, that problems may exist within certain Portal-Pack[®] SCSRs. Un-reacted chemical fragments and fine particles may be present in the breathing tube and would be undetectable by the user prior to use. The chemical dust in the breathing tube appears to result from vibration and impact during normal deployment in the carried or machine-mounted mode. If inhaled, these particles could render the SCSR unusable due to the user's physiologic reaction (a choking response) to the chemical.

MSHA and NIOSH consider the presence of un-reacted chemical in the breathing tube to represent a significant risk. The manufacturer has instituted interim donning procedures to eliminate the hazard of un-reacted chemical dust in the breathing tube (inhaling ambient air and exhaling into the breathing tube three times prior to donning). However, these procedures could be unreliable in a mine disaster.

Chemical dust was observed in the breathing tube of 11 of 43 Portal-Pack[®] SCSRs examined by NIOSH that had been deployed in either the carried or machine-mounted mode. Three of those 11 SCSRs had been machine mounted and would have passed visual inspection for damage. Therefore, MSHA and NIOSH recommend that all carried and machine-mounted MSA Portal-Pack[®] SCSRs be removed from service as soon as they can be replaced by any other approved SCSRs. To aid prompt replacement, MSHA will temporarily permit co-mingling of different SCSR models at mines.

Cached units should also be removed from service but priority should be given to removing those Portal-Pack[®] SCSRs that have been deployed in the carried or machine-mounted mode.

The Mine Safety Appliances Company has been actively working on a recall program to remove all Portal-Pack[®] SCSRs from service and replace them with the Life-Saver 60[®] SCSRs over the next few months. Concurrent with this User Notice, NIOSH and MSHA are instituting procedures to revoke certification of the MSA Portal-Pack[®].

Additional information on this subject may be obtained by contacting NIOSH at 1-800-35-NIOSH or MSHA at 703-235-1358.

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