

National Personal Protective Technology Laboratory

Reevaluation of the NIOSH policy on
emergency escape support breathing
system or “buddy-breather” device used
with open-circuit self-contained breathing
apparatus

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CDC
Workplace
Safety and Health



NPPTL
*Research to Practice
through Partnerships*

Topic Presentations

- NIOSH Presentation
- Requested Presentations
- Panel Discussion
- Comment Period


NIOSH Presentation Topics

- Meeting Objective
- Topic Background

Meeting Objective:

NIOSH, National Personal Protective Technology Laboratory (NPPTL) is currently reevaluating the NIOSH policy stated in the letter dated November 6, 1984, Subject: Notice to all respirator manufacturers with MSHA/NIOSH Approved Respirators.

Meeting Objective

 DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
Public Health Service


Copy to: Denise Carroll
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health - ALOPH
944 Chestnut Ridge Road
Birmingham, AL 35205-1108
November 4, 1994

NOTICE TO ALL RESPIRATOR MANUFACTURERS WITH NIOSH/NIOSH APPROVED RESPIRATORS

Until NIOSH establishes a formal position based upon our review of the information submitted pursuant to the NIOSH Memorandum to Congress regarding the July 26, 1994, titled, "Emergency Escape Breathing Support System" the following policy remains in effect:

The use of any component connected, interfaced, or assembled in combination with NIOSH/NIOSH certified self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) for use as an emergency escape support breathing system or "Buddy Breather" to allow more than one person access to the apparatus' life support system(s) either directly or indirectly, which invalidates the applicable certification during its use. Such invalidation occurs when the SCBA is returned to the certified status through required maintenance, disassembly, and reassembly as prescribed by the manufacturer's instruction manual and other applicable user company policy/rules, legislative directives or enforceable regulations applicable to user health and safety.

Respirator manufacturers must not state in advertising or instructional literature, that use of such components is approved by NIOSH/NIOSH.


John B. Moran
Director
Division of Safety Research

Meeting Objective

Input Sought from Manufacturers and Other Stakeholders :

- Viewpoints and experience on the current policy
- What research has already been completed related to the current policy
- What, if any research is needed to support rescinding, reaffirming, or modifying this policy
- Recommendations on SCBA technology and performance enhancements that would enhance user safety during the emergency use of a buddy-breathing device
- Viewpoints on minimum performance standard requirements and test procedures that could be used to evaluate an emergency escape support breathing system
- Other comments on the subject

Topic Background

- Concern Raised by NFPA Technical Committee for Respiratory Protection
- Including requirements for “buddy-breathing” in a fire service training standard would result in using a NIOSH and NFPA compliant SCBA in an unapproved configuration

Topic Background

The OSHA Regulation 29 CFR 1910.156 Fire Brigade Standard in paragraph (f)(1)(iii) states:

“Approved self-contained breathing apparatus may be equipped with either a “buddy-breathing” device or a quick disconnect valve, even if these devices are not certified by NIOSH. If these accessories are used, they shall not cause damage to the apparatus, or restrict the air flow of the apparatus, or obstruct the normal operation of the apparatus.”

Topic Background

- **NFPA 1500 Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program, 2007 Edition**

- “Virtually all buddy breathing procedures require compromising the rescuer’s SCBA and, for this reason, cannot be condoned.”
- “A key disadvantage in buddy breathing is that it is extremely difficult for two people to leave a hazardous atmosphere quickly while engaged in buddy breathing, simultaneously consuming air at a faster rate.”

Topic Background

- **NFPA 1500 Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program, 2007 Edition**

– “The risk of both victim and rescuer exhausting their air supplies is another scenario associated with buddy breathing. In this case, what starts out as a rescuer-victim relationship ends up a victim-victim relationship, as the shared air supply is exhausted before exiting is possible.”

– “NFPA, ANSI, IAFF, and most SCBA manufacturers do not recommend buddy breathing because it compromises one or more SCBA and can result in the needless impairment or death of either the rescuer or the victim, or both.”

Information Docket

SCBA emergency escape support breathing system or “buddy-breather”

- **Mail:**
 - NIOSH Docket Office
 - Robert A. Taft Laboratories, M/S C 34
CRU – NIOSH 147
4676 Columbia Parkway
Cincinnati, OH 45226
- **Email:** niocindocket@cdc.gov
- **Fax:** (513) 533-8285
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- **NPPTL Web Site:** <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl>