

ROGUE VALLEY FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

Document:	Extended SCBA Use
Section & #:	Organizational Policies #3.22
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Purpose

The purpose of this model operational guideline is to ensure, to the greatest degree possible, the short- and long-term safety & health of all fire department personnel through the uniform use of self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA).

This policy applies to all suppression, prevention, law enforcement, or any other personnel working at an emergency incident.

General

The safety of fire department personnel is the first priority of the life safety strategy. Not only does the SCBA protect personnel while working in Immediate Danger to Life and Health (IDLH) atmospheres, but it also protects personnel from the long term harmful effects of exposure to various mixtures of vapors, chemicals, and particulates commonly found at structure fire incidents. Although not immediately evident or visible, repeated exposure to these irritants can cause significant long-term harmful effects on the individual. Multiple national studies have shown that firefighters have a significant exposure risk during a fire fight, as well as during the first 60 minutes following knockdown of the fire.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the self-contained breathing apparatus will be considered to include the standard backpack style self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA).

Air Purifying Respirators (APR) and the N95 filtration masks provide particulate protection only and are not considered adequate respiratory protection from the products of combustion under this policy.

For the purposes of this policy, "Fire under control" is intended to identify the point at which active fire is extinguished and the overhaul phase begins.

Policy

- During the overhaul stage of firefighting operations, various gases in unknown quantities may be present. During overhaul operations specifically, it is required to continue the use of SCBAs as long as possible to protect all personnel from respiratory exposures. Your SCBA is the only sure respiratory protection in such conditions.
- If a member is in an atmosphere that contains products of combustion, they will be in a SCBA. This includes the overhaul phase of the incident.
- Monitoring of carbon monoxide levels will no longer be utilized as a benchmark for the removal of the SCBA or the presence of toxins in the atmosphere within one hour after fire is under control.
- One hour after the fire is under control of a structure fire, the Incident Commander will evaluate the atmosphere to determine if the continued use of SCBAs is warranted.
- Utilize electric fans, if available, after extinguishment to assist in the removal of toxicants.
- If a member is in close proximity to an atmosphere that contains products of combustion (i.e. near the structure), they will be in a SCBA or take a position that is up wind or make an effort to increase their distance from the hazardous atmosphere.

Responsibility

All fire department officers shall strictly enforce the provisions of this policy. Violations shall be corrected at the time of occurrence whenever possible.