



**pennsylvania**  
OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE COMMISSIONER

Date: May 6, 2013

Subject: Facial Hair/SCBA Use

To: All Local Level Instructors  
County/Regional School Committees  
Certification Field Test Sites

From: George M. Stapleton, Administrator  
Pennsylvania State Fire Academy (PSFA)

The issue of facial hair on firefighters has long been debated in the fire service and, specifically, fire training programs. Concern has centered on the impact that facial hair has on the ability to seal a tight fitting face piece against the face when utilizing Supplied Air Respirators (SAR), Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), etc. Tight-fitting face piece means a respiratory inlet covering that forms a complete seal with the face.

After reviewing all evidence pro and con, pertinent legal decisions, federal regulations and other relevant data, the PSFA have determined that the wearing of beards or other facial hair (other than a well-trimmed mustache) that interferes with the face piece seal is incompatible with the duties of persons directly involved, or who may become directly involved, in operations at emergency scenes or in training where SAR/SCBA is or may be required.

In keeping with this determination, and in order to protect the interests of both students and the Commonwealth, it shall be the policy of the PSFA that persons taking part in any class whose subject matter involves the use or potential use of SAR/SCBA in any real or simulated **hazardous or Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health (IDLH)** atmosphere as defined by NIOSH and OSHA shall be clean shaven, except for the option of a well trimmed mustache. Facial hair shall not interfere with the face piece assembly seal and other hair will be substantially covered by protective clothing.

The final determination as to whether an individual meets this criterion shall rest with the instructor(s) of the class. Instructors and sponsoring officials of county or regional training activities shall be held fully accountable for adherence to this policy. Students **not** in compliance will be deemed to have **not** satisfied class completion criteria, and will **not** be issued certificates.

This policy is in effect as to the conduct of courses for the PSFA Resident, Academy on the Road, Local-Level and the Voluntary Fire Fighter Certification programs. This policy will also serve the best interests of the students, instructors and will reflect a positive example for day-to-day fire and rescue service operations.

Supersedes Facial Hair/SCBA Use Memo dated August 8, 2002
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