

New South Wales Fire Brigades Safety Bulletin 2009/03 Damage to SCBA face masks



Issue

This bulletin refers to a small number of incidents that have resulted in damage to SCBA mask visors. This damage has not resulted in the failure of the visor or the exposure of firefighters to dangerous atmospheres.

Six of the incidents occurred during hot fire training with one other occurring during an incident. The damage to the visors resulted in a bubbling of the polycarbonate compound used to make the mask visor (refer photograph).

This may occur when the visor is exposed to significantly elevated temperatures or from frequent exposure to multiple wears, such as those experienced by repeated use in Hot Fire Cells. The damage is an early indicator that failure of the visor may occur.



CAUTION

Firefighters are reminded that all personal protective equipment (PPE), including SCBA, has limitations of use and will suffer damage if exposed to extreme conditions which exceed the design standards.

Action required

Station Commanders must ensure that firefighters conduct pre-operational checks of all PPE, including SCBA, in strict adherence to documented procedures. Firefighters must also visually inspect their visors immediately after wearing SCBA at firefighting operations. Any damage must be brought to the attention of the Station Commander and the equipment must be removed from service and quarantined in accordance with In Orders 2008/18, [Equipment malfunctions and quarantine procedure](#).

In particular firefighters are to examine SCBA masks for any damage that resembles the following:

- Staining of the visor that prevents proper vision
- Any bubbling or discoloration of the visor, regardless of extent
- Any other damage to the mask of any kind.

Safety Bulletin 2009/03

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NOTE

If firefighters notice these indicators during firefighting operations, they must immediately withdraw to a clean environment and report the damage to the BA/Incident Controller. The affected mask should be removed from service in accordance with In Orders 2008/18.

CAUTION

Firefighters must ensure that they wear the visor on their Structural Firefighting Helmet in the fully down position during firefighting.

Further investigation is currently underway to determine the cause of the damage, including independent testing of the equipment to the manufacturer's design standards. All staff will be kept fully informed of the progress of this investigation.

Noted, Station Commander	A	B	C	D	Other

Contact Officer	File No	Date
Supt Paul Bailey, Manager Safety Phone (02) 9265 2829	EDU/00223 CHO/06178	24 March 2009

Previous Safety Bulletin: 2009/02 — Petrol powered International appliances