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Recently questions have been raised regarding the personal protective equipment utilized in the New York State Fire Training Program, to include the student's structural turnout gear and self-contained breathing apparatus.

In New York State, firefighter health and safety is regulated by the Department of Labor's Public Employee Safety and Health Bureau (PESH), pursuant to section 27-a of the Labor Law. PESH enforces the United States Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) laws and regulation, contained in 29 C.F.R. 1910.156, which establishes requirements for firefighters who are actively conducting operations in atmospheres that are immediately dangerous to life and health (IDLH).

Fire departments are expected to supply their individual firefighter with the appropriate protective equipment for the course being conducted. Employees of the Office of Fire Prevention and Control are authorized to restrict a student's activities during state training courses, if they are made aware of the student using personal protective equipment that is not appropriate or not in compliance with applicable OSHA standards.

OSHA 1910.156(e) establishes requirements related to structural firefighter protective clothing, including that "the performance, construction, and testing of fire-resistive coats and protective trousers shall be at least equivalent to the requirements of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standard NFPA No. 1971-1975, 'Protective Clothing for Structural Fire Fighting' [with limited permissible variations]".

OSHA 1910.156 does not require compliance with NFPA 1851. Therefore, in New York State, NFPA 1851 is a voluntary standard. While fire departments should ensure personal protective equipment issued to firefighters is routinely inspected for serviceability and safety, there is currently no state requirement identifying a set time period for retirement of such equipment.

In addition, it is the responsibility of the students' fire department to ensure that students using SCBA have passed an appropriate medical clearance examination in accordance with OFPC Policy B-12 Training Authorization Letter and OSHA 29 CFR 1910.134 (e). SFI's are not responsible for determining if an individual student is medically capable of using SCBA. SFI's are authorized to remove a student from a SCBA evolution if that student appears to be having difficulty.

Fire Departments must also ensure that SCBA units, including compressed air cylinders, are current for all required testing. Two of OSHA's standards [1910.156(f)(1)(iv) and 1910.120(q)(3)(x)] do permit the use of other manufacturer's cylinders on self-contained breathing apparatuses (SCBA's), when deemed

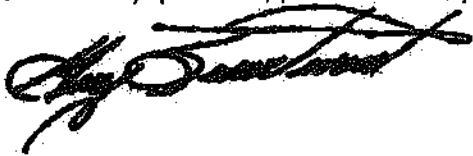
necessary to meet the tasks at hand. The standards state that "Approved self-contained compressed air breathing apparatus may be used with approved cylinders from other approved self-contained compressed air breathing apparatus provided that such cylinders are of the same capacity and pressure rating. All compressed air cylinders used with self-contained breathing apparatus shall meet DOT and NIOSH criteria." Although this temporarily voids NIOSH approval, PESH believes that the interchangeability of air cylinders is important enough to the life safety of fire brigade members to permit it for emergency situations.

Although allowed for emergency situations, in non-emergency situations interchanging cylinders and SCBA between different manufacturers is not permitted. SCBA must be maintained and used in their approved condition. As such, interchanging cylinders and SCBA between different manufacturers is not permitted for any OFPC training courses.

Any equipment damaged during the training exercises is not the responsibility of OFPC or the SFI.

Attached are checklists that State Fire Instructors can utilize in the inspection process of the students PPE. Structural turnout gear and SCBA shall be checked prior to all live fire training events for serviceability. SCBA shall be checked for serviceability at least once in any class requiring SCBA prior to the SCBA being utilized. Students who possess PPE that fails the inspection process shall not participate in training evolutions.

If you have any questions, please contact your Fire Protection Specialist.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Guy Swartwout", written in a cursive style.

Guy Swartwout

Chief, Fire Training & Education Branch