

# PPE CASE Notes

Personal Protective Equipment Conformity Assessment Studies and Evaluations Notes

Respirators used in the workplace need to be approved by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). When users experience issues with NIOSH-approved respirators, NIOSH initiates a Certified Product Investigation Process to identify the root cause and develop corrective actions. Below is an example of a past issue that NIOSH addressed through this process. This example focuses on self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) facepiece sizing issues within fire departments.

## Firefighter SCBA Facepiece Sizing Issues

### ISSUES IDENTIFIED

- SCBA facepieces did not fit all firefighters in the department because it did not form a tight seal against the user's face.
- Some fire departments only ordered a single size facepiece for everyone in their department.
- Fire departments felt they were not getting correct information from sales representatives regarding SCBA facepiece sizing.
- Fire departments reported the sizing issues as a nonconformance to NIOSH.



Photo courtesy of Bundit Jonwises/Shutterstock

### BEST PRACTICE REMINDERS

- Evaluate sizing requirements for the department before making a purchase to ensure all users have a facepiece that fits correctly and forms a tight seal against the user's face.
- Discuss sizing with sales representatives to make sure you purchase equipment that is both comfortable and correctly fits the user.
- Remember that sizing issues are **not** a nonconformance and NIOSH cannot intervene for corrective action in these cases.
- Consult local, state, and federal regulations regarding correct fit of firefighter PPE.
- Refer to guidelines providing direction on facepiece selection in terms of sizing, as well as other important considerations—for example, NFPA 1852, *Standard on Selection, Care, and Maintenance of Open-Circuit SCBA*.



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### Bottom Line

Fire department representatives responsible for purchasing SCBAs need to understand the sizing and fit testing requirements of SCBA facepieces. Care must be taken to purchase the correct sizes and ensure proper fit by those needing respiratory protection from these devices.

#### Get More Information

Find NIOSH products and get answers to workplace safety and health questions:

1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636) | TTY: 1-888-232-6348

CDC/NIOSH INFO: [cdc.gov/info](https://cdc.gov/info) | [cdc.gov/niosh](https://cdc.gov/niosh)

Monthly NIOSH eNews: [cdc.gov/niosh/eNews](https://cdc.gov/niosh/eNews)

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