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Writers Direct Dial No.

User Notice

Life-Saver™ 60 SCSR (Self-Contained Self-Rescuer)

Part Numbers 815500 and 815800

September 30, 2002

MSA has received some reports of excessive heat, sparks, and fire on oxygen-generating breathing apparatus (OBA) canisters used by navies around the world. The reports all occurred since November 2001 on units manufactured since October 2000. Our investigation into those reports indicates that the problem involved a component that is also used on the Life-Saver 60 SCSR. Although we have received no reports of this nature involving Life-Saver 60 SCSRs, it is recognized that these units are intended to provide respiratory protection in emergency escape conditions and the actual opening and donning of a unit may occur very infrequently.

The Life-Saver 60 contains a device, typically known as a quick-start candle, which automatically activates when the user pulls on the mouthpiece to don the unit. The quick-start candle provides an initial supply of oxygen until the chemical in the canister reacts with the moisture in the user's exhaled breath and starts supplying oxygen to the user. The candle is primarily composed of sodium chlorate, but also contains a small amount of iron powder to sustain the production of oxygen from the candle as it burns. Our investigation revealed that a higher than normal amount of iron powder in the starter candle can cause the candle to become excessively hot, thus causing components in close proximity to the candle to ignite.

Based on our investigation into the reported incidents, the number of Life-Saver 60 and OBA canisters produced and a review of our manufacturing and quality procedures, we consider the likelihood of a quick-start candle incident to be very small. Using our test results, we estimate that the likelihood of an incident is 0.009%. Conversely, the probability of successful use is estimated at 99.991%.

As a precaution, MSA will inspect and/or replace (at our discretion) all Life-Saver 60 SCSRs (part numbers 815500 and 815800) with serial numbers ranging from 14573 through 15661. Life-Saver 60 SCSRs within this serial number range were shipped to customers from September 2000 through July 2002. To identify these Life-Saver 60s, the serial number is stamped on the band of each unit.

Please examine all Life-Saver 60 SCSRs in your possession. If you have any with the above identified serial numbers, contact MSA Customer Service toll free at 1-888-421-8324 for further information. As a result of our investigation, MSA made changes to the candle production process to further control variables and also employed additional testing requirements to ensure that quick-start candles contain the proper amount of iron powder.

MSA is committed to product excellence and we trust that you will promptly comply with our request in order that we may address this potential safety concern. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at 1-888-421-8324.

Very truly yours,

Charles J. Seibel, Jr.
Manager of Product Safety