

A History and Overview of ISO Respiratory Standards

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ISO, the International Organization for Standardization as we know it today, began operations in 1947. Their goal was to facilitate the international coordination and unification of industrial standards. Today ISO, headquartered in Geneva Switzerland, has members from over 164 countries and is comprised of 3335 technical bodies. In 2001 the Technical Committee on Personal safety – Protective clothing and equipment voted to form a sub-committee to write standards for respiratory protective devices. This sub-committee first met in 2002 and established a plan to develop standards for respirators whose performance was based on human factors, i.e., the need of the wearers, rather than around the capabilities and limitations of today's respirators. In order to accomplish this, a new way of classifying respirators was required and the needs of the wearers had to be identified. Sub-committee 15 has identified the need for thirty documents including both technical reports and international standards. To date, eight have been approved and published. It is anticipated that the respirator performance standards will be completed by 2015. These standards provide a performance based approach to standards development. This presentation will provide an overview of the performance requirements currently proposed in the ISO Respiratory Protective Device Standards.