

Response to questions from Dr Logan.

Questions.

1 Have you had to deal with fire fighters who do not want to be clean shaven for fit testing and out in the field? How have you addressed this issue?

2 In the United States, OSHA regulations 1910.134(F) and 1910.134(F) require firefighters that are cleared for respirator use to complete an annual fit test or one whenever there is a change in the facepiece. Is there a similar regulation in Australia, or in the UK?

Answers

1 There are two elements to respond to this question. The first element applies to employed staff where in our case it is a condition of employment to be “clean shaven”. The Australian/New Zealand Standard (Selection, user and maintenance of respiratory protective equipment) provides guidance about what is acceptable in terms of facial hair. We have had on occasion the need to provide a razor to members of emergency response teams working with us when it is apparent that their degree of clean shaven is not quite so.

For volunteers their role does not involve internal structural firefighting. In the vegetation fire environment (wildfire environment) as we expand the program, we take a more education and encouragement approach. We continue to look for methods to improve acceptance.

2 Australia has a similar set of rules as you have described for the United States regarding the frequency of face fit testing. A user needs to undertake an annual fit test, This may be more frequent if there is significant change in their facial features, or a new facemask is provided.

Dr Michael Logan