

European PEROSH Project: Determination of Workplace Protection Factors (WPF) for Respiratory Protective Devices

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For Respiratory Protective Devices (RPD) to be correctly selected they must be adequate for the type and level of contaminant and suitable for the environment, the task and the wearer. Adequacy is often assessed based on the protection factor that has been assigned to specify types and classes of RPD – the Assigned Protection Factor (APF). These APFs, set by various regulatory authorities or standards institutes, were based, where possible, on data obtained from workplace performance. However, due to the lack of workplace data available for the derivation of these figures, professional judgment played a part. This was not an ideal situation - however, it was the best route that could be taken when faced with a shortage of WPF data obtained from well defined protocols. The main objectives of the PEROSH project are:

1. To develop a standardized protocol for the determination of workplace protection factors for RPD;
2. To undertake WPF studies to obtain figures of the real performance of RPD under defined conditions;
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of RPD training and the implementation of an RPD programme by comparing the “as is” situation with that after the RPD programme has been implemented.

With the global economy in mind, RPD standardisation was transferred in 2002 from CEN to the International Standards Organization (ISO) under the governance of ISO/TC94/SC15. Although the ISO committee is developing a standard for RPD selection it is unlikely to deliver globally harmonised APFs in the near future. Although not the primary focus of the PEROSH project, the outcomes of this project will help ISO in their work. This presentation will introduce the PEROSH WPF project outlining the project aims and objectives and delve a little deeper into the workplace protection factor protocol being drafted for this project.