

ISRP 2000 abstract

Presenter/author	Title	Abstract
Berndtsson, Göran Safety Equipment Australia	Standards: there is no such thing as "average breathing"	<p>This paper discusses the apparent discrepancies that exist between respiratory standards testing on one hand, and human breathing on the other. A standard testing and approval process, by definition, has to be based on some sort of benchmark. It is the setting of this benchmark that comes under scrutiny here.</p> <p>The criteria used in the testing of respiratory protective equipment are neither realistically set, nor do they in any way reflect actual human breathing. The question can therefore be posed, what is the purpose of the Standard? The physical restrictions that keep testing criteria at an unrealistically low level were discovered around the time of the First World War, and have been scientifically documented since the 1940s.</p> <p>However, with the rising sophistication of both protective devices and the measuring apparatus used to test them, those restrictions no longer exist. Yet, we still use 80-year-old criteria in our testing — criteria that even then were known to be incapable of showing whether a respirator was able to protect a person in a contaminated workplace.</p> <p>This leaves responsible suppliers of respiratory equipment in a quandary: do we say that a respirator is 'good' because it meets the test requirements? Or do we tell the truth and state that there is no connection whatsoever between Standards approval and human breathing?</p> <p>Manufacturers, suppliers and standards people alike need to address the problem. We all know about it, and how it came about. We must now do something about it. If not, we might one day find ourselves in the same hot-seat as the tobacco producers in regard to liability exposure.</p>