

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service FIRE CHIEF'S GENERAL ORDER

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June 17, 2016

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TO: All MCFRS Personnel

FROM: Fire Chief Scott E. Goldstein 

SUBJECT: Respiratory Protection / Cancer Risk Reduction

This Fire Chief's General Order supersedes and rescinds FCGO 14-11.

MCFRS Policy 26-06AMII Respiratory Protection Policy requires the use of Respiratory Protection Equipment (RPE) in atmospheres that are Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health (IDLH) and in "hazardous and/or toxic atmospheres". A hazardous and toxic atmosphere is defined by Policy 26-06AMII as "... an environment that may present or contain respiratory hazards during MCFRS activities, including, but not limited to, those related to overhaul, hazardous materials, EMS, and cause & origin operations".

In light of the growing scientific information linking cancer to firefighting, and in an effort to promote the health and wellness of MCFRS personnel, the use (as defined in Policy 26-06AMII) of appropriate RPE during the entirety of overhaul operations is mandatory.

By making the use of appropriate RPE during the entirety of overhaul operations mandatory, MCFRS strives to reduce the incidence of cancer among all MCFRS personnel.

It is assumed that during overhaul, compartments (rooms, hallways, etc) in structures contain respiratory hazards. When overhaul begins, personnel must continue to use SCBA until conditions meet the parameters outlined below. The issued N95 particulate masks only provide protection from the inhalation of particulate matter, which, for the purposes of this FCGO, includes aerosols.

In order to reduce the level of respiratory protection from SCBA to particulate filter masks, all of the following requirements must be met:

1. Each compartment where personnel will be working must be evaluated individually by a Safety Officer, Haz-Mat Officer (HMO), or Chief Officer;
2. The compartment to be tested must be free of visible smoke;
3. Forced-air ventilation using a non-carbon-monoxide generating fan will be in place before any readings are taken;

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4. Meter readings and atmospheric conditions must be within the limits established by the Safety Section Chief; and
5. Only particulate filter masks issued by MCFRS may be used

The Safety Officer (or Chief or HMO with a meter), with the approval of the Incident Commander, may allow personnel to downgrade their respiratory protection during overhaul if **all** of the conditions listed above are met.

The Incident Commander will ensure that the **minimum** PPE used by personnel conducting overhaul is:

1. Issued particulate mask
2. Long sleeved shirt
3. Gloves
4. Issued eye protection
5. Helmet
6. Issued turnout pants and boots

The Incident Commander or designee will also ensure that:

1. No turnout gear is present in the rehab area.
2. The rehab area is free from vehicle exhaust, smoke, or other obvious contaminants.
3. Personnel entering the rehab area wipe all exposed skin surfaces with a cleansing wipes. Personnel should try to remove as much soot as possible from the head, neck, jaw, throat, underarms, and hands. Personnel should review the overhaul information on quicklinks for more details.
4. Food consumed in the rehab area can be eaten without being touched by bare hands unless hand washing is available.
5. Grossly soiled gear is decontaminated by at least brushing off visible contamination before it is donned again or transported in apparatus.

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Unit Officers will ensure that:

1. Personnel do not wear grossly soiled gear in the passenger compartment of apparatus.
2. Whenever possible, grossly soiled gear is transported back to the station in a separate compartment.
3. Apparatus windows are left open for at least 1 hour after personnel return from suppression or overhaul operations. This is necessary to allow trapped gasses and vapors to escape.
4. Personnel wear hand protection when cleaning or replacing equipment on the scene to include repacking of hose lines.

Personnel are responsible to:

1. Clean themselves to remove as much soot as possible from the head, neck, jaw, throat, underarms, and hands.
2. Ensure that they wear at least an issued particulate filter mask and EMS grade gloves when cleaning equipment that contains any visible particulate matter including dry soot, insulation, drywall dust and similar post-fire contaminants.
3. Ensure that they shower as soon possible after each fire.
4. Ensure that they change their clothes as soon as possible after each fire.
5. Wash their firefighting hood, firefighting gloves and utility gloves at least once a month or after each gross contamination
6. Whenever possible, keep a clean second set of gear available for use.
7. Be mindful of transferring contaminants hand-to-mouth while riding on apparatus.

*Note: This FCGO also modifies MCFRS Policy 26-06AMII *Respiratory Protection Policy*, Section 4(d)2 and removes the restrictions on the use of particulate filtering masks.

Further inquiries should be made to the Operations Executive Office via chain-of-command