Respiratory protection equipment policy

This policy describes the rules around the use of respiratory protection equipment (RPE) by Fire Service personnel.

Who it applies to	This policy applies to all Fire Service personnel who:
	• use respiratory protection equipment
	• manage or control personnel who use respiratory protection equipment.
Definition	For the purposes of this policy, 'respiratory protection equipment' means:
	• self-contained breathing apparatus (BA)
	• fixed airline BA
	• air purifying respirators (APR).

Use of respiratory protection equipment

Level of respiratory protection equipment required

The OIC Fire/Incident Commander (IC) is responsible for determining the minimum level of respiratory protection required at an incident, in line with the requirements below.

Situation	Respiratory protection equipment required
Before entering a structure to investigate a fire or suspected fire (including a private fire alarm call)	BA (donned)
Risk of exposure to toxic substances	BA (donned and started up)
Risk of exposure to fumes	BA (donned and started up)
Risk of exposure to products of combustion	BA (donned and started up) or APR (if criteria below met)
Risk of exposure to particulates	BA (donned and started up) or APR (if criteria below met)
Any other irrespirable atmosphere	BA (donned and started up)

APR use criteria APRs may be used as an alternative to BA:

- at vegetation fires, as long as they are not also protecting a structure (BA must be worn for this)
- during overhaul after a structure fire is extinguished - but **only** if the additional criteria in the table below are met
- if exposed to smoke at an incident and BA is not appropriate for the activity they are undertaking (e.g. pump operator, sector commander)
- if exposed to smoke during training activities
- conducting fire investigation - but **only** if the criteria in the table below are met.

Use of APR during overhaul/ post-fire activities

The table below shows the criteria that must all be met before APR can be used as an alternative to BA during overhaul or post-fire activities, where there is a risk of exposure to products of combustion.

Situation	Yes	No
Is the fire out?	↓ next question	Continue to use BA
Has a K42 SitRep been transmitted?	↓ next question	Continue to use BA
Has 45 minutes or more of ventilation occurred since this message?	↓ next question	Continue to use BA
Have Oxygen (O_2) and Carbon Monoxide (CO) levels been tested and confirmed as acceptable? (continuous monitoring required)	↓ next question	Continue to use BA
Has a successful negative pressure been test completed?	Use APR	Continue to use BA

APRs may be removed at the discretion of OIC Fire/Incident Controller based on the following:

- burnt materials are no longer smouldering
- activities that create a risk of releasing particulates into the atmosphere have ceased.

Where any doubt about the atmosphere exists, continue to wear respiratory protection.

Respiratory protection equipment on appliances

BA equipment on appliances	Every appliance carrying BA will have: • an entry control board • an entry control officer jerkin • a minimum of one BA main guideline. All main guideline and branch line tallies will: • meet the operational requirement • be readily available to BA crews.
BA set requirements	All BA sets will include the following equipment: • BA tally • distress signal unit (DSU) • personal line • a torch. All BA equipment will meet the relevant equipment requirements listed in the *Equipment requirements E1-1-3a* to *E1-1-3g*.
APR equipment on appliances	Every appliance carrying BA will also carry APR canisters and adaptors as follows: • career appliances will carry the same number of APR canisters and adaptors as they do BA sets • volunteer appliances will carry the same number of APR canisters and adaptors as they do BA sets, plus two additional dedicated APR masks and canisters • Specialist Fire Investigators' and Executive Officers' vehicles will carry a single dedicated APR mask and canister.

Entry control requirements

Stage One Entry Control	Stage One Entry Control entails: • controlling the entry and exit of BA wearers using the Entry Control Board • monitoring the safety of BA wearers • ensuring there is a response to any emergency involving BA wearers • maintaining resources for BA wearers. The role of Entry Control Officer (ECO) will initially be carried out by the pump operator. The OIC Fire/IC will appoint a dedicated ECO as soon as possible.

| **Stage Two Entry Control** | Stage Two Entry Control applies when:

• three or more entry control points are set up, or
• six or more teams of BA operators are working at any one time, or
• the OIC Fire/IC considers it necessary.

When Stage Two Entry Control is set up, the OIC Fire/IC will appoint a Breathing Apparatus Support Officer (BASO). |

Training requirements

Who is trained	The following personnel will be trained and assessed to the relevant national training standards in:
	
	• BA:
	  o firefighters carrying out operational duties requiring the use of BA
	  o non-Fire Service personnel covered by an MOU
	  o BA Service Hub personnel carrying out Fire Service on-site station repairs to BA
	  o Approved Fillers trained to fill BA cylinders.
	• APR:
	  o firefighters carrying out operational duties requiring the use of APR
	  o Specialist Fire Investigators
	  o Executive Officers.
	
	Note: OICs may allow an untrained person to use BA provided they are under constant supervision of the Fire Service during an emergency, if their knowledge and skill is required.

Current competency	All Fire Service personnel who are required to wear: • BA will have current competency in wearing the type of BA required at their location (i.e. standard or telemetry) • APR will have current competency in using APR. Current competency is indicated by: • successful completion of the approved BA and APR training modules • 'current' OSM (Operational Skills Maintenance) status in the skills listed under BA and APR in *OS5A Schedule of OSM skills and frequencies.*
Telemetry BA	Only qualified telemetry BA wearers are to wear and operate BA telemetry equipment. Qualified wearers are identified with a green rectangle located on the front of their helmet.

Health and safety requirements

Minimum levels of protective clothing

The minimum level of protective clothing for personnel wearing:

- BA is:
    - structural firefighting uniform
    - splash suit, or
    - gas suit;
- APR is:
    - structural firefighting uniform (Level 2 PPE)
    - wildfire uniform (Level 1 PPE), or
    - protective coverall/overalls (including disposable).

Note: APR is not to be used with splash suits or gas suits – BA must be worn with these.

Health and safety requirements

Health and safety requirements related to BA and APR use are included in:

- *Equipment requirements for BA E1-1-3a to E1-1-3g*
- relevant Fire Service Training manuals
- *AS/NZS 1715:2009*
- *BA Reference Guide (BA-rg)*
- *E3-2 GD Air purifying respirator guide.*

Roles and responsibilities

OIC Fire/Incident Commander	The OIC Fire/IC is responsible for: - determining the minimum level of respiratory protection required at an incident - ensuring that all Fire Service personnel wearing respiratory protective equipment at an incident have the relevant current competencies.
Area Manager	Area Managers are responsible for ensuring that: - all personnel who use: - BA are trained to the required standard described in this policy and the *BA Reference Guide (BA-rg)* - APR are trained to the required standard described in this policy - respiratory protective equipment users maintain 'current' status in the OSM skills - BA, APRs and ancillary equipment is: - maintained to the required standard, as described in the Standard Tests operational instruction - checked weekly (volunteer appliances), or at the commencement *of each shift (career appliances)* - on-station repairs of BA are carried out by trained BA Service Hub personnel - accurate and current records are kept of BA use, maintenance and testing - only Approved Fillers fill BA cylinders.

Related documents

The following documents provide information relevant to this policy:

- Equipment requirements E1-1-3a to E1-1-3g
- AS/NZS 1715:2009
- BA Reference Guide (BA-rg)
- E3-2 GD Air purifying respirator guide

Record of amendments

Date	Brief description of amendment
November 2016	Policy transferred into current operational policy template. Content added about air purifying respirators (APR).Title changed from "E3-2 Breathing apparatus (NCI4)" to "Respiratory protection equipment policy (E3-2 POP)" to reflect this addition. Content added about telemetry BA. Policy amended to align with revised BA Reference Guide (BA-rg). Breathing apparatus training policy (E3-2 TRP) incorporated into this policy. Addition of information relating to APRs.