

OSH INFORMATION MEMORANDUM 87-X-73

TO: All Directors, Supervisors, and Field Personnel
FROM: Dottie Ison, Director of OSH
SUBJECT: Wearing of Respirators with Facial Hair (Beards and Sideburns)
DATE: November 3, 1987

PURPOSE

This memorandum clarified the South Carolina Department of Labor, Division of Occupational Safety and Health's position on Subarticle 6, Section 1910.134 (g)(1)(i) of our Rules and Regulations.

BACKGROUND

There have been many questions about whether an employer is in violation of the standard if employees are allowed to wear respirators over facial hair at the sealing surface of the respirator.

According to federal OSHA, this is clearly a violation.

Based on several studies involving the wearing of tight fitting respirators and facial hair, a bearded person is unable to achieve a suitable fit. This is due in part to the "continuous growth" of facial hair. This condition causes a constant change in the texture and density of the hair and thereby reduces the ability to achieve a face-to-facepiece seal.

In addition, ANSIZ88.2-1992, Section 7.5.1 does not permit facial hair between the face and the sealing surface of the facepiece.

INTERPRETATION

It is in violation of Section 1910.134 (g)(1)(i) when facial hair protrudes under the sealing surface of tight fitting respirators. Hair is allowed to grow on other areas of the face if it does not protrude under the seal. Accordingly, small mustaches, small goatees, or short sideburns that are trimmed so that no hair underlies the seal of the respirator present no hazard. If an employer alleges that a bearded employee obtained a proper fit, the CO/IH shall determine the date of the last fit test, review and observe the fit test procedures prior to issuing any citations.

EFFECTIVE DATE

This memorandum is effective upon receipt and will remain in effect until cancelled or superseded.