

NAVIGATION AND VESSEL INSPECTION CIRCULAR NO. 6-93

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Subj: TERMINATION OF COAST GUARD TYPE APPROVAL FOR GAS MASK/SELF  
CONTAINED BREATHING APPARATUS

Ref: (a) Final Rule, Federal Register, Vol. 57, No. 206, pp. 48320-48327 dated October 23, 1992

1. PURPOSE. This Circular provides guidance for the acceptance of Self Contained Breathing Apparatus for use on commercial vessels.
2. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. NVIC 13-80 is canceled.
3. BACKGROUND.
  - a. On October 23, 1992, the Coast Guard published a final rule in the Federal Register revising carriage requirements for breathing apparatus for commercial vessels and terminating its type approval program for breathing apparatus (reference (a)).
  - b. The Coast Guard did not test or certify breathing apparatus it approved for use on merchant vessels, but instead relied on testing and approval conducted by other Federal agencies. The Coast Guard's approval specification for respirators, 46 CFR Subpart 160.011, is obsolete and has been removed. It required approval by the U.S. Bureau of Mines in accordance with the schedules of the bureau, but the bureau no longer grants approval. On July 30, 1990, the Coast Guard published a notice of proposed rule making (NPRM) in the Federal Register (55 FR 30935) that proposed updating the requirements of 46 CFR Subpart 160.011, to reflect Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) and National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) as the current agencies for testing and approval of respirators. The NPRM proposed updating the approval requirements to reflect current MSHA and NIOSH requirements and safety standards of the shore-side fire fighting industry.
  - c. The NPRM further proposed that the Coast Guard only approve pressure-demand or other positive-pressure Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) for carriage aboard merchant vessels, and delete the requirement in 46 CFR 35.30-20 for the carriage of approved fresh air breathing apparatus (hose masks).
  - d. Hose masks are no longer NIOSH/MSHA approved for use in hazardous atmospheres. The Coast Guard also discontinued approving hose masks, although equipment already carried was permitted to be carried indefinitely as long as it was in good and serviceable condition. NVIC 13-80 explained the need for the carriage of approved self-contained apparatus for new vessels and as a replacement for unserviceable hose masks, and served as guidance until the tank vessel regulations could be revised.

4. DISCUSSION.

- a. Based on the comments received in response to the NPRM, the Coast Guard determined that there was no longer a need for a separate Coast Guard approval program for breathing apparatus. Coast Guard requirements could be met by NIOSH/MSHA certified equipment, provided it also met certain marine requirements. As a result, Coast Guard type approval, for breathing apparatus, has been terminated.
- b. The Final Rule, reference (b), states that Coast Guard requirements can now be met by the carriage of NIOSH/MSHA certified equipment, which must also meet the following additional conditions:
  - (1) be capable of pressure-demand or positive-pressure operation;
  - (2) be open-circuit equipment;
  - (3) have 30 minutes minimum duration;
  - (4) be provided with a full facepiece; and
  - (5) have one spare charge for each apparatus.
- c. The requirement for the carriage of gas masks for protection against leaks from refrigeration units has been deleted. Instead, reference (a) allows the SCBA required for fire fighting also to be used for protection from refrigerants, as they already are aboard Mobile Offshore Drilling Units inspected under subchapter I-A.
- d. Certain obsolete emergency equipment may no longer be carried after November 23, 1994, regardless of whether or not it is in good and serviceable condition. Specifically, hose masks, oxygen generating apparatus (OBAs), and gas masks may no longer be carried after that date. Other previously approved breathing apparatus may be carried indefinitely as long as it is maintained to the satisfaction of the OCMI.

5. IMPLEMENTATION Officers in Charge, Marine Inspection, are urged to bring this circular to the attention of the appropriate individuals in the marine industry in their zones.

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