

FEMA (and now DHS) has pushed for interchangeability of SCBA breathing air cylinders and interoperability of various emergency services equipment for a number of years.

In the proposed revisions for the 2007 edition of NFPA 1981, Standard on Open-Circuit Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) for Emergency Services, there is a proposal to require all breathing air cylinders for SCBA be interchangeable within each pressure category and within the same service life rating. Although many breathing air cylinders can be interchanged between different SCBA manufacturers' SCBAs, doing so voids the NIOSH certification of the SCBA, thereby voiding the certification to NFPA 1981, causes the SCBA to be "used in unapproved manner," and the use of such SCBA to be in violation of OSHA regulations and possibly subject to OSHA sanctions.

The "standardization" of SCBA cylinders proposed in the 2007 edition of NFPA 1981 would allow cylinder interchangeability among various manufacturers' SCBA that are certified as compliant with the 2007 edition of NFPA 1981, and without voiding the NIOSH certification of the SCBA or being in violation of OSHA regulations. The requirements would not be retroactive to SCBA certified as compliant with previous editions of NFPA 1981; however, organizations could choose to "upgrade" their SCBA to the 2007 edition requirements if they so desire.

Please see the ROP (Report on Proposals) for NFPA 1981 on the NFPA website at: www.nfpa.org and click on codes and standards, then on documents and cycles, then enter the standard number, 1981, in the box. Under cycle information you will find the "proposals" in which you will see the special notice written by the Committee, and further in "additional information" you will find the "ROP draft" where you can review the proposed changes in the document format.

Public comment forms can also be downloaded and submitted to NFPA NLT 17.00 EST on 3 March 06.

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If adopted, the "interchangeability" of breathing air cylinders would not be retroactive to SCBA certified as compliant with previous editions of NFPA 19