



OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE COMMISSIONER  
PA STATE FIRE ACADEMY  
1150 RIVERSIDE DRIVE  
LEWISTOWN, PA 17044



### **PRACTICAL AND LIVE FIRE/SMOKE TRAINING POLICY:**

Several courses involve hands-on training in fire and smoke conditions. **All protective clothing** (pants, coat, helmet, gloves and footwear), personal alarm devices (PASS) and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) **MUST meet the requirements of NFPA Standards**. Inspection of protective clothing and equipment by the Academy instructional staff will precede all training exercises. The Academy staff reserves the right to approve or reject any or all protective clothing or SCBA equipment used in training which may result in the student being excluded in practical activities. If the student has a problem in this area, the Academy staff will make every attempt to assist in correcting it so that the student can participate in the training exercises. All students should read and understand the “Dress Code Policy - Acceptable Attire for Outside Activity” listed on the Course Participation Policies and Information sheet enclosed with all acceptance letters.

Many Academy courses involve heavy physical and mental exertion, usually while wearing protective clothing, under simulated or actual hazardous conditions. Since participation in all class activities is a requirement of graduation, students should be sure that they are in adequate physical condition to cope with the demands placed on them by such activity. Fire Academy staff reserves the right to limit or deny participation by any student when (in their opinion) his or her physical or mental state poses a safety threat to themselves or others. Students who participate in courses with practical exercises will be monitored through Rehab for their mental capacity, vital signs, and general well-being for the safety of each member and the integrity of the operation.

**FACIAL HAIR/SCBA USE POLICY:** The issue of facial hair on firefighters has long been debated in the fire service and, specifically, fire training programs. Concern has centered on the impact that facial hair has on the ability to seal a tight fitting face piece against the face when utilizing Supplied Air Respirators (SAR), Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), etc. Tight-fitting face piece means a respiratory inlet covering that forms a complete seal with the face.

After reviewing all evidence pro and con, pertinent legal decisions, federal regulations and other relevant data, the PSFA have determined that the wearing of beards or other facial hair (other than a well-trimmed mustache) that interferes with the face piece seal is incompatible with the duties of persons directly involved, or who may become directly involved, in operations at emergency scenes or in training where SAR/SCBA is or may be required.

In keeping with this determination, and in order to protect the interests of both students and the Commonwealth, it shall be the policy of the PSFA that persons taking part in any class whose subject matter involves the use or potential use of SAR/SCBA in any real or simulated **hazardous** or **Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health (IDLH)** atmosphere as defined by NIOSH and OSHA shall be clean shaven, except for the option of a well-trimmed mustache. Facial hair shall not interfere with the face piece assembly seal and other hair will be substantially covered by protective clothing.

The final determination as to whether an individual meets this criterion shall rest with the instructor(s) of the class. Instructors and sponsoring officials of county or regional training activities shall be held fully accountable for adherence to this policy. Students **not** in compliance will be deemed to have **not** satisfied class completion criteria, and will **not** be issued certificates.

This policy is in effect as to the conduct of courses for the PSFA Resident, Academy on the Road, Local-Level and the Voluntary Fire Fighter Certification programs. This policy will also serve the best interests of the students, instructors and will reflect a positive example for day-to-day fire and rescue service operations.