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SUBJ/FACE SEAL GUIDANCE UPDATE//

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FACE SEAL GUIDANCE UPDATE//

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GENTEXT/REMARKS/1. READINESS IS ALWAYS THE TOP PRIORITY

FOR OUR NAVY AND MARINE CORPS TEAM, AND SAFETY PLAYS A HUGE

ROLE IN KEEPING OUR SAILORS AND MARINES AVAILABLE FOR THE

MISSION. WITH THIS IN MIND, THE NAVAL SAFETY CENTER RECENTLY

CONDUCTED AN EXHAUSTIVE REVIEW OF EXISTING AND NEW RESEARCH

AND SPOKE TO SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS TO REVALIDATE THE NAVY'S

POLICY ON FACIAL HAIR AS IT PERTAINS TO PROPER SEALS ON

RESPIRATORS. WE ALSO COMPARED THE NAVY'S FACE SEAL POLICY

WITH THAT OF OTHER MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS. THE OUTCOME OF

THIS RESEARCH WAS THAT THE GUIDANCE PROHIBITING FACIAL

HAIR IS STILL VALID.

2. WE CONTACTED THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH (NIOSH) AND THE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (OSHA). THEY ARE CLEAR THAT ANY FACIAL HAIR ALONG THE SEALING AREA OF THE RESPIRATOR WILL PREVENT A PROPER SEAL. NIOSH SENT A LETTER TO RESPIRATOR MANUFACTURERS THREATENING TO RESCIND NIOSH APPROVAL TO "ANY RESPIRATOR MANUFACTURER MAKING FALSE CLAIMS" ABOUT TIGHT SEALS FOR USERS WITH FACIAL HAIR. WE ALSO CONTACTED MAJOR MANUFACTURERS OF RESPIRATORS INCLUDING MSA, 3M, AND SCOTT. ALL REITERATED THAT CLEAN, SMOOTH FACES ARE REQUIRED FOR A PROPER SEAL AND THEIR USER MANUALS WARN THAT FAILURE TO FOLLOW THE GUIDANCE CAN RESULT IN SERIOUS PERSONAL INJURY, INCLUDING DEATH.

3. IN RESPONSE TO CLAIMS THAT THE U.S. AIR FORCE HAD CHANGED ITS POLICY ABOUT FACIAL HAIR, THE USAF DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF REPORTED THAT THE USAF COMPLIES FULLY WITH OSHA REQUIREMENTS AND DOES NOT ALLOW FACIAL HAIR ON THE SEALING SURFACES OF RESPIRATORS.

4. THE NAVAL SAFETY CENTER RECOMMENDATION TO MAINTAIN CURRENT

FACIAL HAIR POLICY WAS MADE BASED ON A REVIEW OF 13 FACE SEAL REFERENCES ORIGINALLY CONDUCTED IN 2016 AND AN ADDITIONAL SEVEN REFERENCES CITING THE REQUIREMENT FOR A SMOOTH FACE RESEARCHED LAST MONTH. THIS WAS ALSO SUPPLEMENTED BY PHONE CALLS WITH OTHER SERVICES AND RESPIRATOR MANUFACTURERS. THERE WAS NO DISSENSION. ALL AGREE THAT FACIAL HAIR IMPAIRS THE ABILITY OF THE RESPIRATOR TO PERFORM AS INTENDED AND POSES A HIGH RISK TO USERS WHO ARE OFTEN IN A LIFE AND DEATH SITUATION WHEN THEY NEED THESE DEVICES.//

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