



Facial Hair and Welding Respiratory Protection

Are You Protected?

Well, it's November and that means two things in Australia. Number one, pubs are full of blokes sporting their best moustache in support of Movember. Number two, it's starting to heat up, especially when you spend most of your day under a welding helmet. With all the extra facial hair flying around this month, it's a good time to take a look at what impact facial hair has on welders' respiratory protection and overall comfort.

Facial Hair and Welding

Whether you adorn a goatee, mutton chops, chin curtain, horseshoe, handlebar or simply like to keep it a little rough around the edges to save on razor blades, it may surprise you to hear that if you are required to wear a disposable or reusable respirator at work, you may not be getting the respiratory protection you think you are.

Negative pressure tight-fitting respirators such as disposable or reusable respirators require the welder to be clean-shaven where the respirator's sealing surfaces touch their face. Yes, even the designer stubble and 5 o'clock shadow needs to take a hike if you wear a negative pressure respirator. The fact that welding fume was recently classified as a carcinogen throws a little extra importance on this matter. However, there is a way to keep the whiskers, increase your respiratory protection by 5 times, keep you cooler, increase your productivity and potentially save you or your business money, long-term.

Powered Air Respiratory Protection.

With powered air respiratory protection, the welder is free to let the facial hair flow thanks to the positive pressure keeping the pollutants at bay.

Here are some other reasons why Powered Air Respiratory Protection makes sense for welders:

- 1) Simple to implement with no "Fit Testing" required

With disposable and reusable respiratory protection, you are required to fit test at your cost.

- 2) More Comfortable

Cool and clean air is delivered to the welding helmet keeping the welder more comfortable in hot and humid conditions. Breathing is made easier as the user no longer needs to pull the air through a sweaty filter. Instead of a hot and wet filter on your face, you are free to breathe in your own comfortable environment.

- 3) Higher Levels of Respiratory Protection

Powered air respirators deliver air to the welder which is a minimum of 50 times cleaner than they would otherwise be breathing. This is 5 times the protection offered by disposable or reusable respirators.

- 4) Safety on Multiple Levels

The 3M Speedglas Welding Helmets with PAPR can protect your eyes, face, ears, head and lungs. A recent study out of the US reported that "Foreign body eye injuries decreased over 70% year-on-year in areas that implemented the 3M™ Adflo™ Powered Air Purifying Respiratory Protection (PAPR) Systems"¹. This was a company that employed over 1,500 employees with 600 certified welders. This is a welcome side-effect of

these systems due to their integrated grinding shield. If the welding filter is flipped up for grinding and set-up procedures, the same level of foreign body eye and face protection is maintained.

5) Productivity Improvements

Not only can you weld faster when you can see more clearly, but your entire movement around your workpiece can become more efficient. Because you keep cool and comfortable you become less fatigued which can substantially increase your overall productivity.

6) Long-Term Savings

The up-front cost of a powered air respirator is obviously more expensive than a disposable respirator. However, long-term, the opposite is often true. A PAPR is worn on the welder's back, drawing air into the system from behind the welder away from the greatest concentration of welding fume. For this reason, the filters on a PAPR will need to be changed less frequently than disposable respirator masks or reusable respiratory filters which are worn on the welder's face, in closer proximity to the welding plume.

7) Job Satisfaction

When welders are kept safe, are more comfortable and perform better, their job satisfaction is increased.

So, keep the facial hair, keep cool and upgrade your welding protection today!

View the 3M Speedglas Welding Helmets with Powered Air

Contacts

David Chippendale
0401025954
mailto: davidc@aws.com.au