



Informational Bulletin

Structural Firefighting Hoods

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Approved By: Darren L. Stevens, Fire Rescue Chief

Last week, all operational personnel were issued a second structural firefighting protective hood. This initiative is intended to reduce the risk of contamination and exposure to toxins and carcinogens. Spare hoods should be kept in a clean location with other PPE (e.g. gear bags). They should not be stored in bunker gear pockets, or where they may be exposed to IDLH upon initial entry. Personnel should remove their protective hood as soon as practical after leaving the IDLH environment and replace it upon reentry or prior to returning to service. The original hood should be washed in accordance with the following guidelines upon return to the station.

You must keep your protective ensemble clean. If you do not keep it clean, its protective qualities will be reduced. Failure to keep your protective ensemble clean will increase your risk of death, burns, injuries, diseases and illnesses.

Some fire fighters prefer the appearance of well-used, discolored, “salty” and/or dirty protective hoods as an indicator of their experience and status as veteran fire fighters. These individuals are at grave and unnecessary risk of death, burns, injuries, illnesses and diseases. You must keep your protective hood clean and maintain it as set forth in its labels, manufacturer’s instructions, and this user information guide. This is not merely a question of style, neat appearance and comfort, it is a matter of life and death.

You must clean your protective hood thoroughly and keep it clean. Contaminants not removed from your protective hood may present health hazards, shorten the protective hood’s effective life, reduce its protective qualities and/or catch fire. If you are unsure whether or not your protective hood has been thoroughly cleaned, do not use it.

Soiled protective hoods will expose fire fighters to toxins, poisons, carcinogens, infectious bodily fluids, bloodborne pathogens and other harmful substances that can enter the body through ingestion, inhalation and/or absorption. Repeated small exposures to some contaminants can over time cause serious health problems.

Soiled or contaminated protective hoods reflect less heat and are less insulated than clean protective hoods. Contaminated protective elements are more likely to conduct electricity increasing your risk of electrical shock. Moreover, contamination of your protective ensemble increases the risk that it can catch fire and injure you.

Fire fighters encounter various chemicals in their normal firefighting activities. These contaminants, in addition to being hazardous, can also degrade the protective qualities of the protective hood.

Clean your protective hood as soon as possible after an incident where it has been soiled or exposed to blood or body fluids, tars, fuels, resins, paints, acids, by-products of combustion or other hazardous materials. When possible, flush the protective equipment with water at the fire scene after emergency operations are completed. This will remove some but not all of the contaminants. Avoid spreading these contaminants beyond the fire scene. Fire apparatus and fire stations may become contaminated by contact with your unclean protective ensemble and other equipment after a fire or emergency operation. As a minimum, hoods should be washed monthly for removing normal dirt and dust accumulation.

NFPA Standard 1581 Fire Department Infection Control Program and NFPA Standard 1971 Protective Ensemble for Structural Fire Fighting offer information on cleaning and decontamination of protective ensembles. Chemical and radiological contamination requires special considerations. These standards should be followed for cleaning and decontaminating your protective ensemble.

Do not commercially dry clean. Commercial dry cleaning is generally not recommended for cleaning protective hoods. Some dry cleaning solvents that are used can damage components of the protective hood. Consult with the protective element's manufacturer prior to dry cleaning to learn whether or not dry cleaning will damage your protective hood. **DO NOT USE HOODS THAT ARE NOT THOROUGHLY CLEANED AND DRY.**

Hand Washing

Hand washing of protective hoods should be performed in a utility sink. The water temperature should range between 105-110° F to help avoid hand burns. Protective gloves must be worn during washing. Avoid inhaling vapors from the wash water. Avoid contact of the wash water with skin.

1. Fill basin with hot water (105 to 115° F), and add detergent. Do not use chlorine bleach.
2. Protective gloves must be used for both heat and contaminant protection.
3. Add hoods and soak until thoroughly wet.
4. Hand wash by rubbing together.
5. Rinse thoroughly with clean water.
 - a. **INSPECT BEFORE USE**
 - b. Do NOT wring hoods to dry, squeeze hood to remove excess water.
 - c. Shape & lay flat in a dry, cool, shaded location to dry.

The waste water from the utility sink must be handled according to federal, state and local law. You must avoid the use of chlorine bleach, water temperatures greater than 110° F, heavy abrasion and/or scrubbing, water and/or cleaning solutions with a pH greater than 10.5, mixing flame resistant and non-flame resistant items in the utility sink.

Machine Washing

To prevent the spread of contamination to other laundry or clothing items, home washing machines and public washing machines should not be used to clean contaminated protective hoods. Your fire department or employer should provide cleaning facilities for the sole purpose of cleaning protective hoods and other protective equipment.

1. Fill machine with hot water (120 to 130° F) and add detergent.
2. Add hoods (up to 20 each per standard washer size).
3. Wash using normal wash cycle, double rinse.
4. Remove hoods from washer and dry in cool, dry, shaded area while lying flat.
 - a. INSPECT BEFORE USE.

Top loading agitating washing machines may reduce the service life of protective hoods due to damage caused by mechanical agitation. Front loading machines or machines specially designed for cleaning protective equipment should be used.

The waste water from the washing machine must be handled and disposed of in accordance with federal, state and local law.

You must avoid using chlorine bleach, water temperatures greater than 130° F, chlorinated solvents, heavy abrasion and/or scrubbing, water and/or cleaning solutions with a pH greater than 10.5, high velocity power washers, mixing flame resistant and non-flame resistant items.

Drying Guidelines

In deciding how to dry your protective hood, you must keep two primary factors in mind: Time constraints and the ability to minimize shrinkage. You should separate the outer shell from the other protective hood components or layers to reduce drying time.

- Forced ventilation air drying: Air drying causes little or no shrinkage. Forced ventilation air drying can be achieved by using fans to re-circulate air inside the drying room. The basic drying room should include floor drains, a method to exchange the air with the outside environment, and drying racks for hanging protective elements to provide maximum air exposure.
- You may dry protective hoods without using fans or a drying room. The use of racks providing maximum air exposure is recommended. Do not dry protective hoods in direct sunlight.
- Machine drying: Machine drying is not recommended since the dryer's mechanical action can degrade the equipment.

Do not use heat in machine drying. Such heat can cause damage to protective hoods including excessive shrinkage and potentially cause premature failure and early retirement of the protective hood.

Questions regarding this bulletin should be directed to BC Lorenzen or Technician Butler