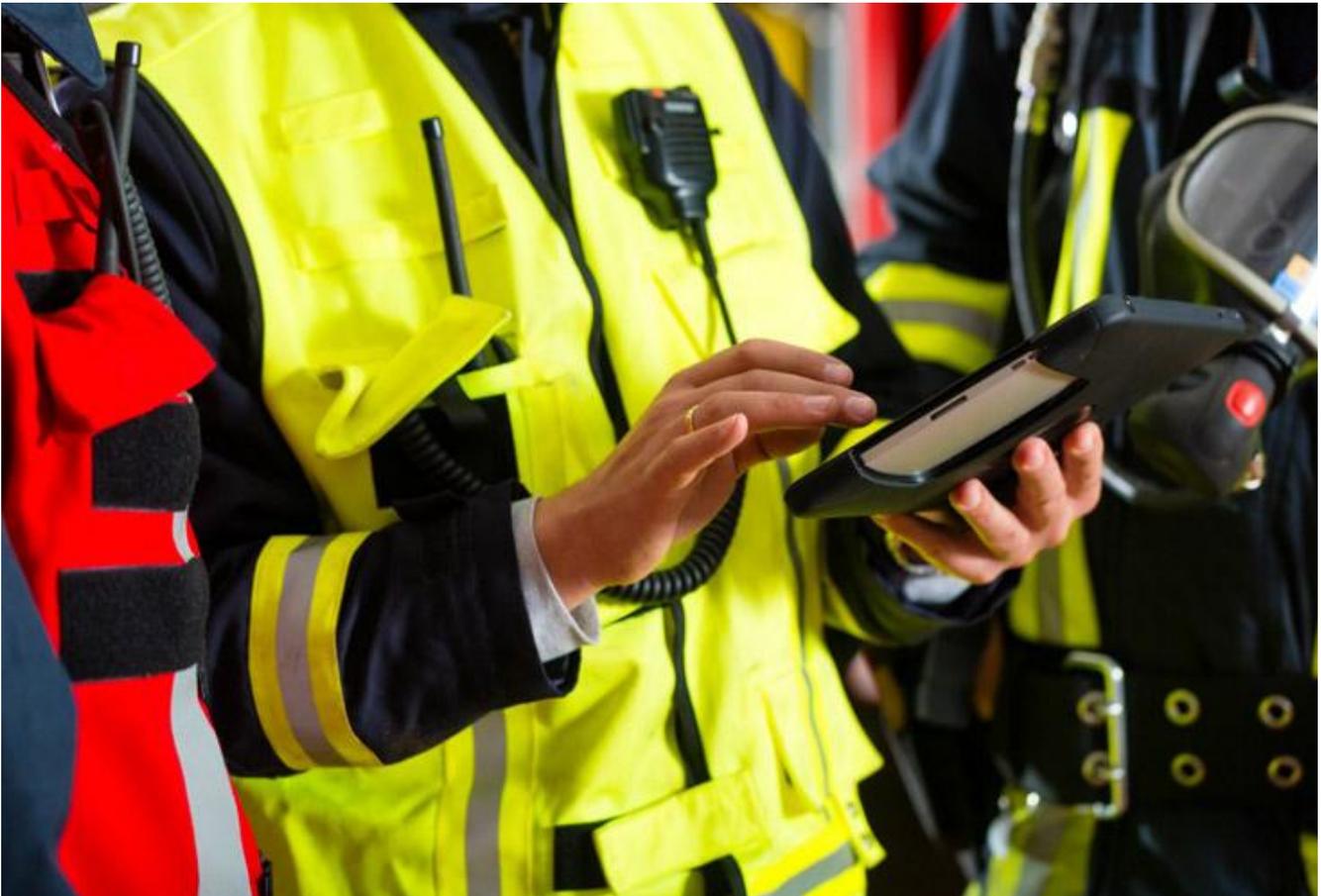




Optimizing an SCBA/PPE Check-and-Maintenance Program

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By Frank R. Myers

With the Millennial Age in full swing, there is no reason for your department to “not” have a software program in place that gives instantaneous information and updates for your SCBA and PPE gear for your personnel. Your department needs to invest in such a program. The advantages are endless. To name a few: regular routine cleaning; maintenance or damage issues that can be immediately resolved (IMPORTANT); and obtaining and documenting equipment after an unfortunate incident occurs to discover what the cause was and then subsequently, learn, develop SOPs, and educate others so prevention can be obtained.

There is no better way of sending a message to your department, its members, the public, and the legal community than by showing that you have the latest and greatest resources available when it comes to your members’ health and well-being. This is not only advantageous for the front-line personnel, but it assures this equipment is going to perform when it comes to those we took an oath to serve and protect. Firefighting inherently is a hazardous and dangerous occupation. That is why the first line of defense when going into a hostile environment is to assure your PPE and SCBA are operating and performing flawlessly.

Much of this flawless performance occurs prior to actual use. It comes from the regular maintenance, inspection, and checks. These assure that the gear is always in a “ready” state and will perform without hiccups. Software programs and instantaneous notifications (to the proper and responsible persons) are invaluable to assure that no one is missing these critical safety checks, equipment and parts replacement, and routine maintenance. If your municipality goes out of its way to get your members the “latest and greatest” in PPE and SCBA, then your members and those in charge of the records and maintenance need to also “pay it forward” to assure you continue getting the best the industry has to offer.

There is nothing more embarrassing than to have “the plug” pulled on funding for new gear acquisitions because of lack of enthusiasm, laziness, and inability to perform the minimum requirements for maintenance and testing. With more and more advancements in technology, advances in PPE and SCBA are more complicated and complex, and therefore require a high level of expertise and a watchful eye for trends that may begin.

Being proactive to assure your members get damaged items replaced expeditiously speaks volumes. Even though the legal community and those seeking restitution always will try to find loopholes when it comes to a tragic event, if you have the best resources available and they are being used as instructed through your SOPs, then you have done the best you can—period. All this could go out the door if

there are irresponsible personnel or acts of negligence by those given the responsibility to assure these preventive SOPs and the programs/software are being utilized properly, correctly, and to their fullest potential.

These positions must have responsible people performing the day-to-day operations. They must care sincerely to assure that their fellow crew members are fully protected “without compromise.” They cannot be flexible or skimp when it comes to others’ PPE, SCBA, and equipment. No shortcuts are allowed here! If these selected persons cannot perform or do not fully understand the importance of their position, then they need to be replaced without question.

The beauty of having a software program available that gives you instant access to information (cloud-based) is that it is readily available from practically anywhere for any reason. It shows that you are on track and can readily access the necessary, important details when needed. This can be an asset both to your local municipality, its politicians, the legal community, the public, and possibly to your career advancement. It not only makes an individual shine, but it makes your department shine.

Human errors are bound to occur, but if you can take the extra steps to help eliminate these errors, then there is less possibility of items getting missed. This is where software and built-in maintenance programs come in. If the data is getting put into the required fields, on a recurring regular basis, according to manufacturer’s specifications and SOPs, then less incidents and/or negligence are likely.

Accountability is also accomplished with the help of software. It lets us know, and others know, when critical important inspections and routine maintenance are missed. The goal is not to try to nail anyone to the cross or enforce disciplinary action, but to ensure that the proper procedures are followed for one’s safety and to catch any issues or malfunctions before it is too late at an active incident.

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