

# WHAT IS SAFETY

## Breathing Apparatus

By: Emil Kaltoft



The knowledge that one breath of contaminated air can be fatal is key to the reason for using Breathing Apparatus. Although safety is not a product that can be purchased, a combination of the right equipment, understanding and training will get you quite far. This article will focus on the safe use of Breathing Apparatus. However, it should be noted that [other equipment](#) is also necessary to secure your own and others' safety when dealing with toxic gases.

Many are often lured into a false sense of safety when purchasing a Breathing Apparatus, believing they now are safe in case of encountering dangerous gases.

**As long as you know how to don your Breathing Apparatus and have it placed at the right location you are safe, right?** Not necessarily, as besides knowing the donning and doffing procedures several other elements come into play when securing your safety. To put it in simple terms, a plan for regular exercises, maintenance and service needs to be created and followed.

Everyone present at the location where possible dangerous gases may appear should be trained in the use of the equipment. Besides this, regular drills should be held. Last but not least regular checks of the equipment are to be made.

"To draw upon my own experience in the field, I have seen breathing apparatus being used, then simply put

back in place, without refilling the cylinder or cleaning the mask. This is a textbook example of an unsafe situation; if there were to be a real threat the breathing apparatus could be in such a state that it is unusable, which could then lead to injury and casualties - this stresses the importance of proper restoration after use".

It is not only after use that a Breathing Apparatus needs to be looked after, but there are also specific intervals at which a Breathing Apparatus requires maintenance.

### **So how do we then go about making sure a Breathing Apparatus is ready for use at any time?**

In addition to training in the use of a Breathing Apparatus the below recommendations regarding maintenance should be followed:

**After each use:** The mask needs to be cleaned and disinfected, this can be done by using disinfection wipes. Also, a visual inspection of the apparatus should be performed. Lastly, the cylinder is to be charged to the correct pressure.

**Every month:** A visual inspection should be performed, the pressure of the cylinder should be checked (a 10% loss is allowed). Also, the mask should be inspected to ensure the mask is clean.

**Every year:** This maintenance should be performed by a certified workshop. Depending on the type of the Breathing Apparatus there can also be 5 year and 10-year major overhauls, which also should only be performed by a certified workshop.

It is only when a Breathing Apparatus is maintained continuously in a proper way as well as the individuals relying on the Breathing Apparatus being well informed and trained in the use, one has done everything to secure the safety of all potentially having to use the Breathing Apparatus.

Emil has been working for Maersk H2S Safety Services since 2008, currently as an instructor of the Basic H2S Course and Confined Space Course. Emil has more than 10 years of experience working offshore, with more than 4 years of experience working in the Norwegian sector.