

3M™ Respirators – Use with Filters from other Manufacturers

It has become apparent that there are certain filter manufacturers in the Australian and New Zealand marketplace who are actively promoting their products as being suitable for use with 3M respirator face masks – either half face or full-face masks.

Australian Standard AS/NZS 1715:2009 indicates that this practice is not acceptable. The most relevant section is in Section 2.3 which says: “RPE is designed and tested as a system. To ensure that RPE provides the intended protection, all RPE shall be purchased and maintained as a system. Mixing and matching components, such as filters and face pieces may not only invalidate any manufacturer’s warranty but may not provide the respiratory protection required. Substitution of Components is not acceptable unless the components have been tested as a whole, comply with AS/NZS 1716 and there is an ongoing quality assurance program to ensure that relevant performance requirements continue to be met.”

This information essentially precludes use of any substitute brand filter made by another company on a 3M mask without express 3M involvement and agreement. These substitute brand filters will not be fully tested on any of the range of 3M masks to prove the assembled respirator meets the performance requirements of the AS/NZS 1716:2012 Standard.

It may be that the substitute brand filters have potentially been tested to part of the Standard, but this would be only for the specified performance as a filter (ie not as an assembled respirator) and the filter may indeed pass some limited AS/NZS1716 requirements – only for a filter.

These substitute filters will not have been tested fitted to a 3M mask as part of an assembled respirator to prove this combination passes the various requirements of AS/NZS1716. The mounting security and tightness of the seal of the filter on the mask, the assembled breathing resistance and the Total Inward Leakage performance of the combination are some of the performance parameters that will not have been measured and assessed.

3M also has no idea of the ongoing quality of these substitute filters – are they made with appropriate design control and manufacturing requirements to regularly produce a high quality, safe, consistent product that continues (over time) to meet the performance requirements of AS/NZS 1716. The warranty of the product would certainly be affected as well as the performance. 3M would not be able to give any assurance to a user that any 3M mask fitted with non-3M filters will provide the claimed or expected level of protection.

In accordance with the position of AS/NZS1716 stated above, it is also not acceptable to use 3M filters on another brand of face mask as the overall respirator performance will not be proven and expected protection can be degraded or lost.

For any respirator related issues, please contact your local 3M PSD representative or call the 3M TechAssist Helpline.

NOTE: Products indicated are rated for protection against certain substances only – each application will be different and an assessment of each is required. The user/PCBU is responsible for determining the suitability of the product for its intended use. Contact 3M for specific advice.

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