
The Tentative Interim Amendment (TIA) for a safer alarm tone became effective December 21, 2016. All SCBA manufactured after this date are required to meet the new universal PASS tone as specified in the TIA – whether the PASS devices are standalone or integrated with the SCBA.

BACKGROUND
In 1980, the Technical Committee on Protective Equipment for Fire Fighters began work on the NFPA 1982 standard to answer requests from the fire service to establish requirements for a device that would sound an audible signal for aid if a firefighter became incapacitated during an emergency. The International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) was instrumental in the developmental work that resulted in this standard. The developmental work was completed in the spring of 1982 and submitted to the NFPA for official adoption. The first edition was released on June 9, 1983.

The name of the committee was changed to the Technical Committee on Fire Service Protective Clothing and Equipment, and the Subcommittee on Personal Alert Safety Systems (PASS) was organized to manage the NFPA 1982 document. This standard specifies the minimum requirements for the design, performance, testing, and certification for all PASS devices, standalone or integrated, for emergency services personnel.

STANDARDIZATION OF THE PASS ALARM SOUND: COMPARISON OF 2013 AND 2018 SOUNDS
In 2013, a standardized PASS alarm sound was introduced so that all devices, regardless of the manufacturer, would emit a common alert sound that could be easily recognized at the fire scene. The purpose of the standard tone was to improve firefighter safety, interoperability on the fire ground, and the directionality of the PASS alarm tone.

In 2015, the NFPA committee responsible for PASS began to hear concerns from fire departments and firefighters that the new standard tone was harder to hear than the older, pre-2013 PASS tones.

In July 2015, a Technical Committee task group was formed to investigate these issues and came up with a new alarm sound which was originally scheduled to be introduced in 2018 with the next iteration of NFPA 1982.

The newly created alarm sound was accepted as being an improvement upon the 2013 sound following a series of tests. One of these tests involved setting off of 2013 and 2018 PASS alarms in a burning building. Blindfolded firefighters in full gear were asked to locate the devices using right or left hand searches. The overwhelming preference of those firefighters was for the 2018 PASS alarm sound.

To validate this testing, two formal evaluation sessions were set up: one at Intertek Laboratories in Cortland, NY and the other at NIST in Gaithersburg, MD. As in the informal tests, firefighters tested overwhelmingly preferred the proposed 2018 sound. An additional test was created to determine the 'distance to detect' – which compared the distance from a PASS device at which the firefighter first identified the PASS alarm. Again, the overwhelming preference was for the proposed 2018 alarm sound.
CHANGE IN ALARM SOUND CONSIDERED AN EMERGENCY
Following the formal testing, the task group decided to escalate implementation of the proposed PASS alarm sound from the 2018 draft and incorporate it into the 2013 (current standard) as a Tentative Interim Amendment (TIA). This TIA requires that all SCBA manufacturers implement the new universal PASS tone to comply with the NFPA 1982, 2013 Edition.

This escalation was due to the deemed emergency nature of the change, in that it provided an advance in safeguarding the lives of firefighters. Because the 2018 PASS alarm sound was shown to provide a higher level of safety for firefighters, it could mean the difference between life and death. Therefore, the NFPA committee decided to push through the change to the NFPA 1982 standard as soon as possible.

TIA BECAME EFFECTIVE DECEMBER 21, 2016
The TIA has been formally released by NFPA and became effective on December 21, 2016. All SCBA manufactured after this date are required to meet the new universal PASS tone as specified in the TIA – whether the PASS devices are standalone or integrated with the SCBA. For fire departments in the United States and Canada, most PASS devices are integrated with SCBA.

EFFECT OF THE TIA ON CURRENT SCBA
Issuance of the TIA does not impact the certification of SCBA presently in the field. Current SCBA that have been certified to meet the NFPA 1982, 2013 Edition standard will continue to maintain their certification as being compliant to the standard and are not required to be updated.

However, while the TIA does not require that current PASS devices be updated to the new alarm tone, all users of PASS devices compliant with NFPA 1982-2013 are encouraged to immediately upgrade their equipment to incorporate this new and more audibly effective PASS alarm sound to increase firefighter safety.

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