



Mine Safety Appliances Company • P.O. Box 426 • Pittsburgh, PA 15230

Telephone: (412) 967-3000

Writers Direct Dial No.

December 16, 2008

**To: Users of Air Masks Equipped with a Universal Rescue Connection Coupling**

On July 17, 2008, MSA issued the enclosed *User Notice* concerning reports of the Universal Rescue Connection (URC) couplings becoming loose. MSA requested that users immediately inspect the coupling tightness following a procedure provided. We also added a tightness inspection to the requirements for MSA certified repair persons when conducting an annual SCBA flow test. However, recent findings indicate that the tightness inspection should be conducted on a more frequent basis.

**MSA now requests that users conduct the tightness inspection on a “monthly” basis. Inspect the coupling tightness visually by verifying that the line drawn on the coupling for the previous inspection has not moved. If the line has not moved, the coupling is sufficiently tight and cannot be loosened by hand. If the line is no longer visible, inspect the coupling according to the attached procedure. Any loose couplings must be replaced before returning the SCBA to service.**

The URC coupling is a component on all SCBA compliant to the NFPA 1981-2002 or NFPA 1981-2007 Edition Standards. All manufacturers of these SCBA provided this coupling to enable a rapid intervention crew to replenish the breathing air in a firefighter’s SCBA cylinder. MSA also uses this coupling on SCBA equipped with the Quick-Fill™ System, both over the shoulder and belt-mounted versions.

If any loose couplings are discovered, please contact your local MSA authorized air mask maintenance center to arrange for the coupling to be replaced. Only MSA certified repair persons are authorized to remove or install a URC coupling.

If you have any questions, please contact MSA Customer Service at 877-672-3473 or 412-967-3000.

Very truly yours,

Charles J. Seibel, Jr.  
Manager of Product Safety

Enclosure

PPL08014-24

LOCATION: RIDC Industrial Park • 121 Gamma Drive • Pittsburgh, PA 15238



## URC Male Coupling Tightness Inspection Procedure

In addition to the tightness of the URC male coupling halves, as a precaution, this procedure also includes a check of the tightness of the coupling to the air mask. Both inspections can be performed simultaneously. The inspection applies to URC couplings mounted near the cylinder valve as required by NFPA Standards and to the identical coupling which is used on the Quick-Fill™ System, both over the shoulder and belt-mounted versions.

1. Close the air mask cylinder valve and relieve the pressure from the system.
2. Using a fine-tip ink marker and a ruler or straight edge, draw a line on the male coupling extending across the coupling joint and onto the adjacent air mask housing, as indicated in the photos below.
3. Attach the dust cover to the coupling.
4. Grasp the dust cover firmly by hand and using maximum effort attempt to loosen the coupling by turning the dust cover counterclockwise. Do not use tools.
5. Remove the dust cover.

**Tight:** If the line drawn on the coupling lines up (see Figure 2), the coupling is sufficiently tight and the air mask may be returned to service.

**Loose at Coupling Joint:** If the coupling is loose or if the marked line does not line up across the coupling joint (see Figure 3), remove the air mask from service until a replacement coupling is installed.

**Loose at Manifold:** If the coupling is loose at the joint where the coupling attaches to the air mask (see Figure 4), remove the air mask from service until the coupling is inspected by an MSA certified repair person.

**Note:** Only authorized MSA or Aeroquip personnel should re-tighten the coupling.



FIGURE 1  
Typical Assembly



FIGURE 2  
Tight



FIGURE 3  
Loose at Coupling Joint

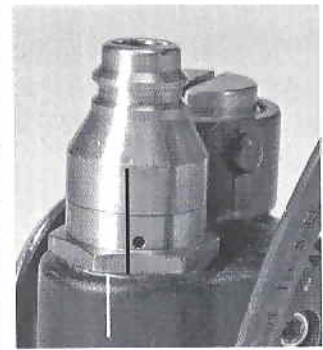


FIGURE 4  
Loose at Manifold

If any loose couplings are discovered, please contact your local MSA authorized air mask maintenance center. Only MSA certified repair persons are authorized to remove or install a URC coupling.



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## User Notice

### Universal Rescue Connection

July 17, 2008

MSA has received reports of Universal Rescue Connection (URC) couplings loosening on self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) equipped with this coupling. The coupling male halves are factory tightened by the coupling supplier, Aeroquip Group of Eaton Hydraulics Operations. In response to the reports received, MSA inspected URC couplings at two large fire departments. In total, less than 1% of the couplings had an extruded internal o-ring and leaked and, approximately 5% were loose and could be unthreaded by hand. Testing confirmed that the coupling may become loose after repeated pressurizations over an extended period of time in service. A loose URC coupling can cause an unexpected extrusion of the internal o-ring and potentially result in rapid loss of air.

**MSA requests that users immediately inspect the coupling according to the attached procedure to assure that it is sufficiently tight and cannot be loosened by hand. Any loose couplings must be replaced before returning the SCBA to service.**

To help ensure that the URC coupling remains sufficiently tight, MSA added this inspection to the requirements for MSA certified repair persons when they conduct the annual SCBA flow test. Therefore, couplings on new SCBA shipped from MSA or MSA authorized distributors within the past year do not require the initial user inspection. As a precaution, the inspection procedure also includes a check of the tightness of the coupling to the SCBA. We have reviewed this matter with SEI (Safety Equipment Institute – the NFPA approval agency) and NIOSH and they are in agreement with the corrective actions indicated.

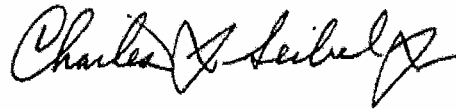
The URC coupling is a component on all SCBA compliant to the NFPA 1981-2002 or NFPA 1981-2007 Edition Standards. All manufacturers of these SCBA provided this coupling to enable a rapid intervention crew to replenish the breathing air in a firefighter's SCBA cylinder. MSA also used this coupling on SCBA equipped with the Quick-Fill™ System, both over the shoulder and belt-mounted versions.

If any loose couplings are discovered after performing the initial inspection, please complete the attached form and forward it to your local MSA authorized air mask maintenance center to arrange for the coupling to be replaced free of charge. Only MSA certified repair persons are authorized to remove or install a URC coupling. In order to provide quick service, a replacement coupling of similar or newer vintage will be installed.

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MSA regrets any inconvenience that this situation may cause; however, we trust that you will accept the indicated measures to address this potential safety concern. If you have any questions, please contact MSA Customer Service at 877-672-3473 or 412-967-3000.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles J. Seibel, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Charles J. Seibel, Jr.  
Manager of Product Safety



## Replacement URC Male Coupling Order Form for SCBA Users

Please complete the information below and provide this form to your local MSA authorized air mask maintenance center or MSA certified repair person.

The authorized air mask maintenance center or certified repair person will obtain the appropriate number of replacement couplings of similar or newer vintage and install them on you SCBA free of charge.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Shipping Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list below the five-digit date codes and quantities of loose URC coupling in your possession. The date code is stamped on one of the six wrench flats of the male coupling.

<u>Date Code</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Date Code</u>	<u>Quantity</u>
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

(List any additional date codes on a separate copy of this form.)

If you have any questions, please contact MSA Customer Service at 877-672-3473 or 412-967-3000.