Guidance and Information:

Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) - information for those persons with facial hair

If you are a person who has facial hair (Facial hair - this term applies equally to full beards and/or stubble growth. Moustaches, unless large, will not normally encroach on the respirator seal area and do not normally preclude face-fit testing. Some small 'goatee' type beards that do not extend under the chin or wider than the edges of the mouth, can fit wholly within the respirator and may not preclude face-fit testing.), in the area of contact of the face seal of a tight fitting full-face, or half-face, respirator (mask) you will not be able to be face fit tested for use of such Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Normal mask type respirators rely for their efficiency on a tight fit to the wearers face and the Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) to the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) requires that all wearers of such devices be personally face–fit tested to ensure that the respirator that they are provided with fits properly and thus affords the level of protection expected of it. Facial hair in the area of the respirator face seal prevents a proper seal being achieved, or maintained, as the facial skin distorts during normal working conditions and/or speech, thus the Regulations preclude testing of such persons and the use by them of this type of respirator.

If, subject to risk assessment of the tasks that you are to undertake, it is concluded that you require to wear respiratory protective equipment the only option available to you is the use of a powered positive pressure respirator allied with a full headtop of a type suitable for the activity to be undertaken. As powered respirators do not rely on a tight fit to the face to afford protection, but rather are loose fitting and afford protection through the supply of filtered air to the interior of the headtop this creating an atmosphere within the headtop that is at positive pressure to ambient and thus prevents the ingress of airborne pollutants.

The powered respirator recommended for University of Edinburgh staff is the 3M Jupiter Turbo Unit (see below), this should be fitted with the appropriate filters and connected to a headtop suitable for the activity being undertaken (see below for selection). Other makes and models may be suitable.

For most laboratory and animal house activity the 3M HT-101 QRS or the 3M HT-103 QRS headtop will be suitable. For laboratory use where chemical splash is a hazard then the 3M HT-401 QRS or the 3M HT- 402 will be required, these also provide low and medium energy impact protection respectively. Integral head protection is provided by the 3M HT-701 QRS and the 3M HT-840 QRS, with bump only protection being provided by the 3M HT-820 QRS, there are also three headtops suitable for use when welding. The Health and Safety and Procurement Departments have secured favourable discounts with Arco and 3M, therefore the catalogue prices below should be
ignored and the table appended at the end of this information sheet referred to instead.
Note to Animal Unit users:

It may be, in exceptional cases, that the Animal Unit that you use has a spare power unit and that this can be borrowed at each visit, thus you as the user would only require to purchase a headtop and filters. Please check with the relevant Animal Unit Manager.

Should you require further information please contact Occupational.Hygiene@ed.ac.uk