



Firefighter air pack

No Equipment Failure

by Mike Hedeem
photos by Andrew Heinze and Scott Barstow
Published Jan 12, 2007

When a Rochester firefighter had trouble breathing working a Baldwin Street house fire during the early morning hours on New Year's Day, he removed his mask and suffered burns to his face.

There were reports of equipment failure, but tests ruled that out.

"We did take the firefighters breathing apparatus, confiscated it, took it to Buffalo for testing, it tested completely normal well within manufacturers limits, within NFPA and OSHA limits," said Deputy Fire Chief John Caufield. "We conducted some of our own internal testing; we didn't find any evidence of any equipment failure what so ever."

Firefighters say they are responsible for their own equipment and it's unusual when it doesn't work.

"Every morning each firefighter checks his SCBA to make sure it's functioning right, it's got a full bottle, to see if there's any defects," explained Lt. Tom Teresi. "As soon as we find any defects we take it right off the load, get a spare. Each rig has an extra SCBA, we call it a supply depot, to replace that one also."



It's still unclear why Firefighter Rob Cabrera had to remove his mask. Doing so left him with second-degree facial burns.

"I did talk to firefighter Cabrera at the hospital, and he told me that he did feel like he was losing air, he wasn't getting enough air to sustain himself," said Caufield. "And just in a brief moment removed his face piece in close proximity to the fire caused him to be burned."

Caufield praised the other firefighters at the scene for their quick action in getting their partner to safety.

"As soon as they knew something was happening they literally, it was not gentle, they literally grabbed the firefighter and just shoved him toward safety."

The deputy chief says Cabrera is resting comfortably at home and anxious to get back on the job.