

## FIRE FIGHTERS GUIDANCE NOTE # 4-4

### ISSUE:    **PERSONAL ALERT SAFETY SYSTEMS (PASS)**

Every fire fighter performing interior structural fire fighting should have a Personal Alert Safety System (PASS) attached to his or her self-contained breathing apparatus. This PASS should unit a piercing sound when the fire fighter is motionless or when manually activated.

The purpose of the PASS is to assist in locating a fire fighter who may be injured, trapped or unconscious particularly in conditions of low visibility due to smoke. Prompt rescue is essential to prevent serious injury or death due to smoke inhalation as a result of the fire fighter running out of air.

Although firefighters should always use a buddy system, there have been several cases where low visibility due to smoke has led firefighters to become disoriented and separated from their team. For this reason, PASS should be used in conjunction with entry control procedures.

The use of a Personal Alert Safety System by firefighters may be necessary in hazardous environments other than structural fires as well Fire Departments should review their own operating procedures to ensure PASS devices are worn if required in confined spaces, hazardous materials incidents, etc.

Desirable features when purchasing new PASS devices should include:

- compliance with the 1993 edition of the NFPA 1982 standard (Standard on Personal Alert Safety Systems {PASS});
- a separate high temperature alarm circuit and signal;
- durability (i.e. resistance from damage due to water, chemicals, temperature extremes, rough handling);
- ease of operation (i.e. on/off indicator light, controls that may be operated with gloved hands, low battery indicator, pre-alert signal); and
- a reliable maintenance and repair program.