

Procedures for Immediately Dangerous to Life or Health (IDLH)

If contaminants cannot be determined, or if the exposure level cannot be identified or reasonably estimated, or if no exposure limit or guidance is available and estimates of the toxicity cannot be made, the atmosphere shall be considered immediately dangerous to life or health (IDLH) and requires the highest level of respiratory protection and reliability. All oxygen-deficient atmospheres (less than 19.5% oxygen by volume) are considered IDLH.

Contact EH&S if there is a known or suspected IDLH atmosphere that needs to be entered. Rescue services must be onsite for entry into IDLH atmospheres.

The following respirator types are approved for use in IDLH atmospheres:

- A full facepiece pressure demand self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) certified by NIOSH for a minimum service life of thirty (30) minutes.
- A combination full facepiece pressure demand supplied-air respirator self-contained breathing apparatus (SAR) with auxiliary self-contained air supply.
- NIOSH-certified respirators for escape from the atmosphere in which they will be used.

Procedures for IDLH Atmospheres

For all IDLH atmospheres, supervisors shall ensure:

- One individual or, when needed, more than one individual is located outside the IDLH atmosphere;
- Visual, voice, or signal line communication is maintained between the individuals in the IDLH atmosphere, and the individuals located outside the IDLH atmosphere;
- The individuals located outside the IDLH atmosphere are trained and equipped to provide effective emergency rescue;
- The supervisor or designee is notified before the individuals located outside the IDLH atmosphere enter the IDLH atmosphere to provide emergency rescue;
- The supervisor or designee, once notified, provides necessary assistance appropriate to the situation; and
- Individuals located outside the IDLH atmospheres are equipped with:
 - Pressure demand or other positive pressure SCBAs, or a pressure demand or other positive pressure supplied-air respirator with auxiliary SCBA; and either
 - Appropriate retrieval equipment for removing individual(s) who enter(s) hazardous atmospheres where retrieval equipment would contribute to the rescue of individual(s) and would not increase the overall risk resulting from entry; or
 - Equivalent means for rescue where retrieval equipment is not required under the bullet item above this one.

