

Making Every Breath Count

Submitted by: McOnie Agency

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Diversified technology company, 3M, leads the way with a new softhead top range for use with its powered and supplied air respirators, created to pharmaceutical client specifications.

Becoming ill from the side effects of your job is something that the majority of us do not have to worry about. The pharmaceutical industry has a particular challenge as it faces hazards including cytotoxic drugs and biologically active ingredients. Choosing the appropriate respiratory protective equipment (RPE) in terms of adequate levels of protection and suitability to the job is paramount.

In response to customer feedback, 3M has developed a new range of soft headcovers and hoods for use with their powered and supplied air equipment, designed to combat existing concerns on protection and comfort. Of importance to the pharmaceutical industry, the new headcovers have an Assigned Protection Factor of 40.

The headcovers have been designed with fully integrated suspension; just attach the 3M powered or supplied air equipment and you're ready to go. They are suitable for applications that require frequent replacement of the entire headtop assembly, such as pharmaceutical manufacturing, or in situations where there is a low level of soiling of the outer fabric.

The hoods can also be a highly cost-effective choice for some high disposal rate environments; just the soiled fabric is replaced, while the suspension and the air ducting can be reused. The hoods also have a unique externally-adjustable airflow control that allows wearers to modify the airflow distribution to suit the each person.

Jo Partridge, Technical Services Manager for 3M's Occupational Health & Environmental Services Division said: "Our customer feedback showed us that with most hoods and headcovers in general, there was an issue with whistling around the ears when the air was pumped in. The new airflow distribution for the hoods and sizing options for the headcovers minimises the problem, allowing for better communication and comfort.

Last year 2.1 million people were suffering from an illness they believe was caused or made worse by their current or past work. In June the British Lung Foundation begins its campaign to raise awareness of lung disease and the lives that it affects. Respiratory disease is the second biggest killer in the UK (117,456 deaths in 2004) and deaths from occupational lung disease are rising rapidly.

An independent report, commissioned by 3M, of over 200 workers and more than 100 health and safety managers, shows that manufacturers of protective equipment need to be doing more to help health and safety specifiers. The specifiers are becoming swamped with the range of equipment available and the varying levels of protection offered against different hazards. Nearly one in four health and safety managers said the main issue they face is in knowing which level of protective equipment to use for which hazard – a potentially life-threatening lack of information. If the wrong RPE is chosen or the wrong

level specified then the workers lives can be put at direct risk of contracting lung disease.

Another issue is that of comfort. If the RPE is not comfortable or impedes the worker's job then it is unlikely to be worn correctly, if at all.

Ends

Additional information:

RPE can be broken into two main types: Air Filtering and Air Supplying. Air Filtering devices include disposable respirators, half and full masks and powered air (turbo unit) respirators. Air supplying devices include equipment that deliver air from either a cylinder (Self Contained Breathing Apparatus) or compressor (Air fed equipment).

Caroline Walton, Senior Marketing Executive adds: "Knowing what our customers want is critical but it takes time. Over the past year we have been carrying out customer research, listening and collating feedback, which has been such an informative task. To ensure that we are achieving our goal, we need to be able to provide RPE that people want to wear and does not impede their jobs. From this we have created a new range; the 3M S-Series Headcovers and Hoods, to ensure that we are hitting the right mark with exactly what the industry needs."

Other benefits of the new S-Series include:

- Excellent field of vision with reduced curvature for decreased reflections and glare
- Improved air-flow distribution for comfort and lower noise
- Greater comfort - they are lightweight and loose-fitting
- Coverage of the head or head, neck and shoulders as well as eye and face protection to EN166 (liquid splash and low energy impact) – the same level of protection as most safety spectacles
- An Assigned Protection Factor (APF) of 40.

The S-Series range can be also worn over prescription eyewear and some limited facial hair.

The headcovers are available in two sizes - small to medium and medium to large - and the use of computer modelling using worldwide sampling of head sizes means that the new suspensions will comfortably fit most wearers.

Caroline continues: "The feedback has allowed us to ensure that we really are providing the right service and respiratory protection to our clients. Once the product has been bought we don't just disappear over night. We know how hard it is for health and safety managers to ensure that all the personal protective equipment is properly maintained and workers trained on how to wear it correctly. This is essential to achieving the optimum life from the system - critical in the current climate as it can save companies time and money. It is also a legal requirement of CoSHH that record cards are filled out for all non-disposable RPE."

A new guidance package has also been developed for each headtop and turbo combination to show how regular checks and maintenance can help maintain protection levels, optimise the lifespan of the product and avoid the cost of early replacement. A new maintenance and care folder will be sent out to all users who request it.

Caroline explains: "Coupled with the 3M helpline, we really believe that this will be a very useful product to help health and safety professionals, especially in this difficult climate."

Jo Partridge, Technical Services Manager for 3M's Occupational Health & Environmental Services Division said: "Our aim, as a global manufacturer of personal protective equipment, is to keep people safer at work and to help and support health and safety managers. To do this we have to invest a lot of time in research and development. We are constantly looking forward at new technologies and making sure that we really are creating RPE that people want to wear, is comfortable and allows them to stay productive."

"The helpline is an essential component to our maintenance and care package. We talk through the process with the customer to understand the hazard and the environment. Each call is dealt with on its own helping find solutions for each issue."

For more information about the new head tops visit www.3M.co.uk/worldofcomfort or call 0870 60 800 60. To request a care and maintenance pack email ohes.helpline.uk@mmm.com

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3M – practical and ingenious solutions that help our customers succeed

3M is a \$25 billion diversified technology company which, since 1902, has been creating innovative products that help make the world healthier, safer and more productive. Well known 3M brands include Scotch, Post-it, Scotchgard, Thinsulate and Scotch-Brite.

3M employs some 76,000 people worldwide and has operations in more than 60 countries. It produces thousands of innovative products for customers in dozens of diverse markets and its 45 technology platforms touch nearly every aspect of modern life - the company has applied its expertise in RFID technology to deliver biometric passports; it is using its understanding of the healthcare industry to provide hospitals with infection prevention and detection solutions; and in 2008 it launched the world's first hand-held micro projector, the MPro110.

The UK and Ireland is home to one of the largest 3M subsidiaries outside the USA, employing more than 3,500 people across 17 locations, including 12 manufacturing sites.

Products manufactured in the UK include coated abrasives, occupational health and environmental safety equipment, adhesive tapes, industrial microbiology products, drug delivery systems, high-performance coatings, secure documents and passport scanners.

www.3M.co.uk/speedglas

Photograph Usage:

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