



FIRE DEPARTMENT • CITY OF NEW YORK
Supplement No. 6 to Department Order No. 8
February 3, 2011



2.1.1 IMPORTANT MESSAGE REGARDING BLAZE FIGHTER GLOVES

A recent investigation initiated by the Department and assisted by national safety experts has found that the Blaze Fighter glove, distributed to all members in recent months, is not in compliance with safety standards set by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). Although the version of the Blaze Fighter piloted and ordered by the Department was NFPA certified, a change made by the manufacturer without FDNY's knowledge resulted in the distribution of a glove that does not meet the NFPA standard. FDNY is very close to identifying suitable, NFPA-complaint gloves as a replacement that will be ordered and made available to all members as soon as possible.

Members still in possession of the blue Commander gloves shall wear them until the replacements are issued. However, the Blaze Fighter still provides thermal protection and members who do not have Commander gloves may continue wearing the Blaze Fighter, after reviewing the Bureau of Operations Pass It On Bulletin dated February 2011. Since the Blaze Fighter was distributed seven months ago, beginning in June 2010, a total of six firefighters have received burns to the backs of their hands while wearing the new gloves.

Background

In 2007, FDNY began searching for a new fire-resistant glove in response to firefighters' request for a replacement of the Commander gloves, which had been used for a number of years. In the Department's ongoing attempt to provide firefighters with the very best in equipment and gear, FDNY began a pilot program, testing several models of NFPA-compliant gloves, emphasizing dexterity, burn resistance, performance and durability.

One of the gloves piloted between July 2009 and January 2010 was the Blaze Fighter, a NFPA-approved glove manufactured by The Glove Corp. The Blaze Fighter was among four finalists that were distributed to firefighters at six of the city's busiest companies to test in the pilot. Overall, members who participated in the field testing gave the Blaze Fighter the highest ratings and, beginning in mid-2010, FDNY started purchasing that glove for issuance to members.

After burn injuries were first reported to the backs of several members' hands in November, FDNY immediately contacted the manufacturer to verify that no changes had been made to the gloves since the pilot phase. The Glove Corp. indicated to FDNY that the gloves were unchanged. The Fire Commissioner then ordered that the gloves be sent to an outside expert for evaluation. FDNY subsequently learned that the gloves piloted were not identical to the gloves purchased.

On Jan. 14, 2011, the Safety Equipment Institute, a non-profit Personal Protective Equipment certifying body, issued a statement that the Blaze Fighter glove was not compliant with NFPA standards. After FDNY directed further inquiries to The Glove Corp., the company informed the FDNY that one layer of the glove's lining material was replaced in December 2009. The gloves received by FDNY had a different layer of lining than the gloves we piloted, although there was no way to observe the change.

FDNY asked The Glove Corp. to replace the gloves with pairs that were NFPA compliant but on Jan. 31, 2011, The Glove Corp. said that it was unable to provide replacements. Therefore the Department is currently working to provide an NFPA-approved replacement from another manufacturer.

The highest priority of the Department has always been and continues to be the safety of its members. We have communicated this information about the gloves and our concerns to the UFA and UFOA. The Department will work as expeditiously as possible to resolve this situation and will continue to keep all members and the unions informed.

By Order of: **Salvatore J. Cassano**, *Fire Commissioner*
Edward S. Kilduff, *Chief of Department*