



RESPIRATORY PROTECTION

Respirators protect workers against hazards such as insufficient oxygen environments, harmful dusts, fogs, smokes, mists, gases, vapors and sprays. These hazards have the potential to cause both immediate and long-term effects if not mitigated. In the workplace where respirators are used there should be a written respirator program that describes the proper procedures for selecting, fit testing, training, using, caring, cleaning, sanitizing, inspecting, record keeping, storing and operating respiratory protective equipment.

Fit Testing & Seal Check

For proper protection, a worker must ensure the respirator they are using fits and functions properly. This means the equipment must be the proper size and seals to the face.

A fit test is to be conducted by a properly trained person in fit testing to ensure the equipment is the correct size. A fit test is required before a worker uses a respirator for the first time. Fit tests may need to be performed more frequently if there has been changes to a worker's body such as weight gain or loss, or facial changes such as dentures or broken jaw bone.

A seal check is to be performed by the worker prior to use of the respirator every time it is used. Regular seal checks are necessary to ensure that contaminated air or particles will not leak into the respirator. If it doesn't seal properly, don't use it.

Facial Hair & Respirators

It is critical to your personal health to ensure you have a proper seal when wearing a respirator for protection. This means that workers need to be clean shaven before their shift begins as beards, sideburns, mustaches and stubble prevent a good seal and are not permitted with respirator use. Facial hair is much larger in particulate size compared to other fibers and particles you are trying to protect yourself from, meaning you won't be properly protected as the smaller particles such as fibers and fumes will be able to pass through.

Choosing the Right Respirator

Choosing the right respirator to protect workers from airborne contaminants is essential. They may not protect from all contaminants as different contaminants require different protection. There are limitations for each type of respirator, and you must be familiar with them prior to using them.

Types of Respirators

- Disposable particulate respirators provide minimum protection and are typically used to protect against nuisance dusts and fumes.
- Full mask and half mask air purifying respirators are cartridges and particulate filters. Air purifying respirators only work if you use the right cartridge and/or filter for the specific contaminant. Mechanical filters will block solid particles, while chemical filters soak up substances.
- Supplied air respirators can come in a variety of forms such as self-contained breathing apparatuses, air hoods, full body suits, and airlines or work packs.

The Key to Respiratory Safety

You must recognize that the airborne hazards exist through pre-job planning. It's vital to recognize all the chemicals, materials and hazards you may be exposed to, as well as conducting frequent hazard assessments and workplace inspections to help identify and control those hazards.

[Download a recording form here.](#)