

## Respiratory Protection

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What is a respirator?

Respirators are a type of personal protective equipment that can be used to clean the air of contaminants from your breathing zone or supply clean air to a worker who is inside a work area. There are many different types of respirators available to protect workers from exposure. It is critical to select the appropriate respirator based on the assessed workplace hazards.

Who needs respiratory protection?

Situations where respirators may be required include:

- When you're working around gases, fumes, mists, dust, or vapors.
- When engineering controls, such as ventilation, cannot appropriately limit your exposure to contaminants.

When administrative controls, such as workplace policies or standard operating procedures, dictate wearing one.

- When the safety data sheet (SDS) for a chemical you work with states that you need one.

Respiratory Protection Programs

If your organization requires respirator use, then it must have a Respiratory Protection Program in place to be compliant with the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) Respiratory Protection Standard. Elements of the program include:

- Hazard assessments (e.g., ventilation measurements, air exposure monitoring, etc.)
- Respirator selection
- Employee training and standard procedures
- Medical evaluations from licensed healthcare providers
- Fit testing
- Program evaluation

Respiratory Hazards

Different respirators and or filtering cartridges may be required to protect against different airborne hazards. Some potential hazards are:

- Gases and vapors (e.g., xylene, isopropyl alcohol, etc.)
- Mists and fogs (e.g., aerosol paints, etc.)
- Fumes (e.g., welding, brazing, lead, hexavalent chromium, etc.)
- Particulates (e.g., asbestos, silica, hexavalent chromium, etc.)
- Chemicals
- Oxygen deficiency

Respirators

Before you can use a respirator at work, you must be trained and authorized to do so. This includes completing and passing a medical evaluation and fit test. Respiratory protection must be suitable for the types of workplace hazards you face. See your workplace's Respiratory Protection Program for more information about facility-specific policies. Selection options include:

- Air purifying respirators
- Filtering face piece particulate respirators/cartridges

- o Chemical cartridge respirators
- o Powered-air purifying respirators (PAPR)
- o Canister respirators
- Air supplying respirators:
  - O Supplied-air systems (SAR)
  - O Self-contained breathing apparatus

#### Voluntary Respirator Use

If only voluntary respirators are used in your organization, the requirements for a written program are reduced. The only type of respirator allowed to be used exclusively on a voluntary basis is the filtering facepiece respirator, also called a dust mask. If respirators other than this type are used on a voluntary basis, a written program must be implemented. Employees voluntarily using respirators must:

- Have the respirator inspected by a supervisor prior to use.
- Understand the limitations of the respirator.
- Only use respirators that are approved by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) for the work being conducted.
- Only wear respirators in approved environments.
- Maintain their respirator.
- Understand and sign Appendix D of OSHA's Respiratory Protection Standard: (Mandatory)

Information for Employees Using Respirators When Not Required Under the Standard.