

Respiratory Protection

<This training topic acts as a Respiratory Protection Refresher Training. Additional and more detailed training is required to cover the specific usage of the respirators used in your company for all new employees and/or when you change the type of equipment used>

Respirators are a type of personal protective equipment used to protect workers against exposure to airborne substances. They are devices that are worn over the mouth and nose that assist you to breathe in environments that may otherwise be hazardous or harmful to the worker. Emphasis should always be on controlling hazardous substances from contaminating the air in the first place. This can be accomplished by using engineering controls, such as exhaust ventilation, or by administrative controls, such as isolation or job rotation. Respirators should only be used when these 2 other options cannot control the hazard or until these methods are put into effect.

There are 3 basic types of respirators. <Section should be modified or replaced with basic information on the specific respirators your company uses>

- Air-purifying – removes contaminants by filtering, absorbing, adsorbing, chemical reaction
- Supplied-air – provide breathing air separate from the environment
- Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) – provides complete independence from airline and offers greatest degree of protection

Inspection of respirators:

- Before each use – inspect face-piece, head straps, valves, connecting tubes and cartridges and all elastomeric parts for pliability and signs of deterioration.
- After each use – clean face-piece and elastomeric parts with warm soapy water. DO NOT use alcohol as this can dry out parts and prevent a proper seal.

Donning and removing respirator:

- Don respirator for proper fit - Ensure all straps are properly secured
- Seal checks – Once the respirator is on, ensure seals are secure by applying positive and negative pressure on the face piece (inhale and exhale sharply).
- Applicable face piece seals may be hindered by facial hair, glasses, etc.

Recognition of medical signs or symptoms that may limit or prevent use (ironically, these same symptoms can be used to identify the need to don a respirator in the first place):

- Claustrophobia
- Difficult breathing
- Feeling faint
- Headaches

Respiratory protection is used in many types of businesses and lines of work. Each work environment should be analyzed to determine if and when respirators are needed and required for the job being performed. Then the appropriate respirator for the hazard shall be provided. As an employee, if you feel that additional respiratory protection is needed to keep you safe while working in a particular situation or environment, you should notify your supervisor or company safety officer immediately. They will evaluate the situation and determine the most practical and safe way to proceed.

Review any/all applicable policies from the company safety manual with the team at this point.

SAFETY TAKE-AWAY:

Misusing a respirator can often cause more harm than being without one. If unsure how to use your respirator, ASK!