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A Guide To Respirator Safety and Protection

When the air you breathe at work is filled with airborne contaminants or becomes oxygen deficient, you will be required to wear a respirator. Respirators are vital to your safety and in some cases, your survival!

Medical Evaluation

The medical evaluation helps to ensure that you can safely wear a respirator. This evaluation must be offered to anyone required to wear a respirator. The medical evaluation must take place before fit testing and periodically for as long as you wear a respirator. A physician or licensed healthcare professional reviews your responses and may require follow-up exams to be sure that it is safe for you to wear a respirator. Our licensed healthcare professional will provide you and your employer with a written recommendation about your ability to use a respirator.



Fit Testing

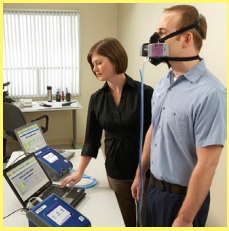
After the medical evaluation, a fit test is required before the first use of the respirator to ensure it provides a protective and tight seal. This is an annual test and is also required when a different mask is used.

There are two types of fit testing:

- **Qualitative:**
An agent like vapor or smoke is released. If the user detects the agent through taste, smell or nasal irritation, the fit is not correct.



- **Quantitative:**
A numerical measure is used to assess and measure air quality inside the mask.





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Wear it properly

We all know respirators are vital to your safety and, in some cases, your survival. It is important you learn why and what you need to know to use a respirator properly. The type of respirator you use depends on the hazard, the hazard's airborne concentration and which one best meets the hazards you face.

Before you use your respirator, check the following:

- **Respirator function**
- **Tightness of connections**
- **Condition of all its parts**
- **Damage to any parts**
- **Facepiece is pliable and not deteriorated**

Wearing a respirator and wearing it correctly is part of your job. Take the time needed to understand how your respirator works and make sure it fits you properly.

User Seal Check

Before entering a hazardous atmosphere, perform a user seal check to ensure that your respirator is properly seated on your face and tightened properly.

Positive Pressure Test

1. Close off the exhalation valve.
2. Exhale gently into face piece.
3. If there is a slight positive pressure without air leakage, the fit is good.

Negative Pressure Test

1. Close off the inlet opening of the canister or cartridge by covering it with your palm or by replacing the filter seal.
2. Inhale gently so the face piece collapses slightly.
3. Hold your breath for 10 seconds.
4. If the face piece stays slightly collapsed and you don't feel any inward air leakage, the fit is good.



Facial Hair

Employers cannot permit employees with facial hair to use respirators with tight fitting face pieces. Facial hair comes between the sealing surface of the face piece and does not create an air tight seal.

