



RESPIRATORY PROTECTION A BASIC UNDERSTANDING

Always follow the established program for respirator selection and use.

Respiratory hazards in the workplace should be controlled whenever possible using engineering, work practice, or administrative controls. However, if these controls are not feasible or do not provide sufficient protection, appropriate respiratory protection must be used. Workers who are required to use respiratory protection to perform their work activities must participate in the employer's Respiratory Protection Program.

Employers should perform an analysis of specific hazards for each job to determine if and what type of respirator will be required. This analysis would include a review of safety data sheets (SDS) for products being used and may also involve exposure monitoring.

Where respirators are necessary to protect the health of the employee or whenever respirators are required by the employer, the employer must establish and implement a written respiratory protection program with worksite-specific procedures.

Workers who are issued respirators must wear them, which is why they must fit properly and be comfortable to wear. Respirators must be worn throughout exposure. Work requiring respirators ideally should be for short periods of time.

The following are some key things that employers and employees should keep in mind if respirators are used on a worksite:

EMPLOYERS:

- Employers must provide the proper respirator for the hazards present. Single strap dust masks are not NIOSH-approved and do not protect from hazardous exposures.
- Employers must ensure that workers using respirators have had medical evaluations and fit testing procedure performed.
- Employers must ensure that workers are trained in the proper use and limitations of the specific respirators being used and those employees are using their respirator and not someone else's.
- Employers must ensure that the procedures and schedules for cleaning, disinfecting, storing, inspecting, and otherwise maintaining the respirators are being followed.
- Employers must ensure respiratory protection APF adequately places the use within the specific PEL, STEL, etc. for site specific exposures.



EMPLOYEES:

- Employees must inspect respirators before each use and during cleaning. Must also perform a seal check each time they put it on.
- Employees must ensure that they are using their respirator and not someone else's.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following needs to be completed prior to using a respirator?

- a) A medical evaluation and fit test procedure must be performed
- b) The respirator needs to be inspected
- c) The user needs to perform a seal test

d) All of the above

2. Employees must inspect respirators before each use and during cleaning.

a) True

b) False

3. Respirators need to be inspected annually.

a) True

b) False - Respirators need to be inspected before each use and during cleaning



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Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act, employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthy workplace and workers have rights. OSHA can help answer questions or concerns from employers and workers. OSHA's On-site Consultation Program offers free and confidential advice to small and medium-sized businesses, with priority given to high-hazard worksites. For more information, contact your regional or area OSHA office, call 1-800-321-OSHA (6742), or visit www.osha.gov.

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