

Highlights of OSHA's Respiratory Protection Standard, 29 CFR 1910.134

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) respiratory protection standard, [29 CFR 1910.134](#), aims to reduce occupational exposure and illness from airborne contaminants. Respirators are a form of personal protective equipment (PPE) and should only be used when engineering controls and work practice measures do not adequately prevent atmospheric hazards at the worksite. This one pager highlights different aspects of the respiratory protection standard.



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SELECTION OF RESPIRATORS

Different hazards require different types of respirators (e.g., air-purifying, supplied air), so it is important to evaluate workplace hazards before respirator selection. Have a competent person, like an industrial hygienist, perform evaluations. In order to select a proper respirator, evaluations must provide a reasonable estimate of employee exposure and classify the contaminant's physical form. Workplace evaluations must also identify atmospheres which are immediately dangerous to life or health (IDLH) (e.g., oxygen-deficient atmospheres).

MEDICAL EVALUATION

Evaluate an employee's ability to wear a respirator **PRIOR** to fit testing and initial use. A physician or other licensed healthcare professional (PLHCP) must review a medical questionnaire (completed by the employee) and may perform a medical examination which could include a pulmonary function test. The PLHCP provides a written recommendation to support (or not support) an employee's ability to use a respirator, including any restrictions on respirator use. Be sure to maintain copies of any documentation received from the PLHCP.

FIT TESTING

Ensure fit testing is performed **PRIOR** to initial use and on an annual basis for all for supplied air and air-purifying, tight-fitting respirators. Trained and qualified Respirator Program Managers or designated employees can use either qualitative or quantitative methods to perform fit testing. Additional fit testing is required when an employee's physical condition changes, which could affect respirator fit (e.g., weight changes, scarring, facial hair). Fit test employees with the same make, model, type and size respirator that will be used in the workplace. Maintain copies of any fit testing documentation.



USE OF RESPIRATORS

Set rules and expectations to support the proper use of respirators. Tight-fitting respirators are designed to provide a good seal; therefore, employees should not have facial hair that interferes with the seal of the respirators. Corrective lenses and other PPE, if applicable, must not interfere with the fit of the respirator during use. Employees should perform a seal check after donning a respirator.

Establish procedures for employees to leave the work area when: 1) they notice odor breakthrough while using a respirator, 2) the need to clean the respirator arises, 3) an employee notices changes in their breathing, or 4) other workplace factors appear which may affect respirator use. Inform employees what to do for emergency situations in IDLH atmospheres too. Put these procedures in writing and communicate them to affected employees.

MAINTENANCE AND CARE OF RESPIRATORS

Inspect, clean, and disinfect all respirators **PRIOR** to use, and as often as necessary. Respirators must be cleaned and inspected before being reissued from one employee to another. Follow any manufacturer instructions on cleaning and disinfecting respirators and ensure employees store respirators in a proper manner.

BREATHING AIR QUALITY AND USE

Ensure supplied breathing air meets Grade D requirements. Make sure purchased breathing air cylinders have a certificate of analysis from the supplier stating it meets Grade D breathing air. Place portable ambient air pumps where it will draw only clean breathing air from the surrounding environment.

IDENTIFICATION OF FILTERS, CARTRIDGES, AND CANISTERS

Look at all filters, cartridges, and canisters to ensure labels are legible. Develop a respirator user cartridge change out schedule for cartridges/canisters which do not utilize an end-of-service-life indicator. Take into account specific workplace practices and work conditions when developing the schedule.



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TRAINING AND INFORMATION

Provide annual and refresher training to supervisors and employees who use or have assigned responsibility to oversee respirator users. Document the completion of any training provided.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Conduct an annual evaluation of the written respiratory protection program to determine if all respirator program requirements are followed, effective, and fully implemented.

For additional information on the SMCX's services, please visit the SMCX-hosted website at <https://www.smscx.org/>.