



GOALS

This safety session should teach employees to:

- Realize the importance of respirators.
- Carefully inspect, clean, and store respirators.

Applicable Regulations: CFR 1910.134



1. Respirators are vital pieces of personal protective equipment.

- Air-purifying respirators remove harmful contaminants from the air you breathe. They protect against substances that can cause cancer, lung impairment, and other diseases.
- Air-supplying respirators provide clean breathable air. They protect against oxygen-deficient atmospheres that could cause disorientation or death.
- Therefore, it's crucial that respirators function properly—and it's your job to ensure that they do.

2. Inspect respirators before and after each use.

- The Occupational Safety and Healthy Administration (OSHA) requires employees to inspect respirators for wear and deterioration both before and after each use. Emergency respirators must also be inspected monthly, even if they have not been used.
- Check rubber or plastic parts for signs of holes, cracks, or tears.
- Check the face piece (especially the face seal surface), the headband, the valves, the connecting tube, and the fittings for signs of wear or deterioration.
- Check for loose connections.
- Check to see whether air and oxygen cylinders of self-contained breathing apparatuses are partially depleted. They should be fully charged according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Check for dents or corrosion in filters, cartridges, or canisters. Replace as needed.
- Turn in any respirator that needs repairs. Don't perform the repairs yourself.

3. Clean respirators after each use.

- Respirators must be cleaned and disinfected before they are reissued.
- Air-supplying and emergency-use respirators must be cleaned and disinfected immediately after each use.
- Respirators can be cleaned in batches of 20 as long as the cleaning fluid and rinse water are changed between batches.
- Batch respirators together by manufacturer to avoid confusing disassembled parts.
- It's generally best to disassemble and clean respirators one at a time to avoid losing or confusing the parts.
- Respirators may be rinsed in buckets of clean water, but OSHA says it's better to rinse them thoroughly in running water. Detergents or disinfectants that dry on respirators can cause dermatitis.



4. Follow this step-by-step procedure to clean and sanitize respirators.

- Remove filters, cartridges, or canisters.
- Disassemble face pieces by removing speaking diaphragms, valve assemblies, hoses, and other components.
- Wash respirator parts in a bucket of warm water (no hotter than 110 degrees Fahrenheit (°F)) with a mild, nonoily detergent. Remove dirt with a stiff-bristle brush. Use a sponge on lenses to avoid scratches.
- Rinse components thoroughly in clean, warm running water.
- Disinfect respirator parts by immersing them for two minutes in a bucket of disinfectant solution. Use one of the following disinfectant solutions: household bleach and water, tincture of iodine and water, or other commercially available cleansers approved by the respirator manufacturer.
- Rinse respirator parts thoroughly in warm running water.
- Dry respirators by air-drying or by wiping them with a clean, lint-free cloth.
- Reassemble the face piece, then replace filters, cartridges, and canisters as needed.
- Test the respirator to be sure that inhalation and exhalation valves are in place and that the respirator is working properly.

5. Store respirators in the proper manner.

- Store respirators away from dust, sunlight, heat, extreme cold, excessive moisture, and damaging chemicals.
- Rest face pieces and exhalation valves in a normal position to prevent them from warping.



DISCUSSION POINTS:

Show employees how to disassemble a respirator. Discuss which cleaning and sanitizing solutions you provide and how much solution to mix with water. Then demonstrate how to clean, rinse, sanitize, rinse, and reassemble a respirator.



CONCLUSION:

- Take good care of respirators because they take care of you.
- Respirators can protect you from harm. So take good care of respirators with proper inspection, cleaning, and storage procedures.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE:

Have your employees take the Respirator Care and Cleaning quiz. By testing their knowledge, you can assess their understanding of how to care for respirators and determine whether you need to review this important topic again soon.