



GOALS

This safety session teaches employees to:

- Understand guidelines for voluntary use of respirators.
- Inspect and maintain voluntary use respirators properly.

Applicable Regulations: 29 CFR 1910.134 Appendix D



1. Respirators may be used in the workplace even when not required.

- Respirators are an effective method of protection against air contaminants when properly selected and worn.
- The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) encourages respirator use even when exposures are below permissible exposure limits (PELs) designated in the safety and health standards for air contaminants.
- If you are provided with a respirator for your voluntary use, or if you provide your own respirator, you must be sure that the respirator itself does not present a hazard.

2. Follow these guidelines for voluntary use of respirators on the job.

- Read and heed all instructions provided by the manufacturer on use, maintenance, cleaning, care, and warnings regarding the respirator's limitations.
- Choose respirators certified for use to protect against the air contaminant you're dealing with.
 - A label or statement of certification should appear on the respirator or respirator packaging and will tell you what the respirator is designed for and how much it will protect you.
- Do not wear your respirator into atmospheres containing contaminants for which your respirator is not designed to protect against.
 - For example, a respirator designed to filter dust particles will not protect you against gases, vapors, very small solid particles, fumes, or smoke.
- Keep track of your respirator so that you do not mistakenly use someone else's respirator.

3. Understand payment issues regarding respirators that are used voluntarily.

- When you voluntarily purchase and wear your own respirator at work, your employer is not required to reimburse you for the cost of the respirator.
- If you are allowed to use your own respirator, however, your employer is responsible for its adequacy, maintenance, and sanitation.
- If you have provided your own respirator but your employer's hazard assessment determines that an upgrade or replacement is required, your employer must pay for the upgrade or replacement regardless of who paid for the original respirator.
- If your employer allows you to wear a respirator on a voluntary basis when not required by OSHA or your organization's policy, your employer is required to implement limited provisions of a respiratory protection program that covers medical fitness and proper maintenance procedures.



4. Inspect respirators before each use.

- **Face piece**—cracks, tears, holes; face mask distortion; and cracked or loose lenses/face shield;
- **Head straps**—breaks or tears and broken buckles;
- **Valves**—residue or dirt and cracks or tears in valve material;
- **Filters/cartridges**—approval designation (e.g., N95); gaskets; cracks or dents in housing; and proper cartridge for hazard;
- **Air supply systems**—breathing air quality/grade; condition of supply hoses; hose connections; and settings on regulators and valves; *and*
- **Rubber/elastomer parts**—pliability and deterioration.

5. Clean and disinfect your respirator after each use.

- Remove filters, cartridges, or canisters.
- Disassemble face pieces by removing speaking diaphragms, demand and pressure-demand valve assemblies, hoses, or any components recommended by the manufacturer.
- Wash components in warm water with a mild detergent or with a cleaner recommended by the manufacturer.
- A stiff bristle (not wire) brush may be used to facilitate the removal of dirt.
- Rinse components thoroughly in clean, warm, running water, and drain.
- When the cleaner used does not contain a disinfecting agent, respirator components can be immersed for 2 minutes in a solution of bleach and water or in a solution of iodine and water.
- Air dry respirator components or hand-dry with a clean, lint-free cloth.
- Reassemble face piece, replacing filters, cartridges, and canisters where necessary.
- Test the respirator to ensure that all components work properly.



DISCUSSION POINTS:

Discuss your policy on voluntary use of respirators, including pay for respirators, proper use, inspections and maintenance, and respiratory protection program requirements.



CONCLUSION:

- Be safe when using respirators voluntarily on the job.
- If you use a respirator when not required by OSHA or your employer, make sure the respirator you use is the right one for the job, inspect it carefully, and use it properly.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE:

Have your employees take the Voluntary Use of Respirators quiz. By testing their knowledge, you can judge their ability to understand the rules and whether they need to review this important topic again soon.