

Respiratory Protection

A respirator is a device worn over the mouth, nose, or the entire face to prevent inhalation of dusts, smoke hazardous or noxious substances. Before wearing a respiratory protection, several things must be considered.

1. **Respiratory Hazard Assessment** – An assessment of the processes, equipment, materials, end-products and by-products, must be performed to identify potential exposure hazards. Once exposure hazards are identified, personal exposure monitoring is recommended to determine the exposure levels and appropriate hazard controls.
2. **Hazard Controls** – Once a respiratory hazard assessment has been completed, the next step is to determine how to control the hazards. Following the Hierarchy of Controls, if Elimination, Substitution, Engineering Controls, Work Practices, and Administrative Controls are not feasible, or not enough, respirators will be considered as the last line of defense.
3. **Respiratory Protection Program** - If it is determined that a respirator is required to perform a work function, the existing respiratory protection program will be followed.
4. **Medical Evaluation** - Before the use of a respirator, employees will be evaluated by a physician using a medical questionnaire to determine whether or not it is safe for them to wear a respirator.
5. **Respiratory Selection**
Air – Purifying Respirators (APR) - APRs are respirators that use filtering face pieces, cartridges, or canisters to remove contaminants from ambient air you breathe.

Examples of Air-Purifying Respirators (APR) include:

- **N95**
- **Half-face**
- **Full-face**
- **Powered Air-Purifying Respirator (PAPR)**

6. **Training** – Once it is determined that respirators will be utilized and the appropriate respirator is selected, employees must be properly trained on respiratory protection. This training should contain more in-depth information on all of the elements contained in this Safety Briefing.
7. **Fit Testing** – The last process to be completed before being able to wear a respirator is the fit test. A “fit test” evaluates the seal between the respirator facepiece and your face. In order to be properly fit tested, participants must be clean shaven so facial hair does not disrupt the respirator facepiece seal to the face. Employees can only use the exact make, model, and size of respirator(s) for which they passed the fit test. Fit testing must be completed on an annual basis.
8. **Respirator User Requirements:**
 - Use the proper respirator, cartridges, or canisters for the intended contaminants
 - Do not wear a respirator with any facial hair that could disrupt the respirator seal with the face
 - Follow the proper schedule for cartridge/canister replacement
 - Inspect your respirator before each use
 - Clean your respirator after each use, if it is reusable
 - Store your respirator in a sealed container (reusable respirator only)
 - Use only NIOSH approved respirators
 - Read all manufacture instructions before use
 - Perform a user seal check after donning
 - Follow proper sanitation procedures if respirators are shared.

