



Weekly Safety Meeting

Taking Care of Your Respirator

OSHA requires employers to identify and protect against breathing hazards. Engineering controls are the preferred form of protection, e.g., ventilation, using less toxic measures, and enclosing operations that create air contaminants. When air measurements reveal that engineering controls haven't brought air hazards to safe levels, employers must provide employees with respirators.

Your respirator may be the most important tool of your job. It protects your most precious asset, your health. Yet, more often than not, respirators find their way to the bottom of tool bags where they become damaged and/or very dirty inside and out. Both of these conditions compromise the protection the respirator is designed to provide and that, in turn, can be detrimental to your health. Like most tools, respirators require periodic inspection, cleaning, and repair.

In order for your respirator to work properly and to ensure that it does not in itself pose a hazard, a regular maintenance and cleaning schedule is required. In general, respirators should be inspected for basic function prior to each use. Clean as often as necessary to prevent the occurrence of unsanitary conditions.

Get a good respirator that fits and that will seal out contaminants. OSHA requires employees to have fit tests to assure a good seal. A respirator should be secure, but not too tight around the chin, not slip, not pinch the nose, and allow you to move your head and talk.

Cleaning & Disinfecting:

Following each use, respirators should be cleaned, disinfected and stored according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Respirators with replaceable filters are reusable, cleanable, and usually repairable. A respirator classified as disposable may be reused by the same worker as long as it functions properly.

Guidelines for cleaning should include the following instructions:

- Remove filters, cartridges, or canisters. Disassemble facepieces by removing speaking diaphragms, demand and pressure-demand valve assemblies, hoses, or any components recommended by the manufacturer. Discard or repair any defective parts;
- Wash the parts in warm water (43°C/110°F maximum) with a mild detergent or with a cleaner recommended by the manufacturer;
- Rinse components thoroughly in clean, warm water;
- Hand dry with a clean lint-free cloth or air-dry; and
- Reassemble and test before re-using.

Inspection:

All respirators shall be inspected routinely by the user before and after each use and after cleaning to check condition of face piece, head bands, valves, and hoses, as well as canister, filter, or cartridge fit.

Storing:

Store the respirator so it's protected from dust, sunlight, heat, extreme cold, excessive moisture, and damaging chemicals. Respirators stored in lockers or tool boxes must be in carrying cases or cartons. Rest the respirator's rubber and plastic parts in their normal position for storage. Don't squish. Doing so will deform and impair the seal.

Repair of Respirators:

Respirators that fail an inspection or are otherwise found to be defective must be removed from service and either thrown out discarded, repaired, or adjusted in accordance with the following procedures:

- Respirator repairs or adjustments must be made only by persons appropriately trained to perform such operations and use only the respirator manufacturer's NIOSH-approved parts designed for the respirator.
- All repairs must be made according to the manufacturer's recommendations and specifications for that particular repair.
- Reducing and admission valves, regulators, and alarms must be adjusted or repaired only by the manufacturer or a technician trained by the manufacturer.

Remember:

Respirators are an important safety and health protection when used properly. Learn to select, use, and maintain them—and keep the air you breathe free of harmful contaminants.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT = SELF-DEFENSE!!

