



Weekly Safety Meeting

Respiratory Protection User Seal Check

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, over 3 million United States employees in approximately 1.3 million workplaces are required to wear respiratory protection. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration Standard (29 CFR 1910.134) requires an annual fit test to confirm the fit of any respirator that forms a tight seal on the wearer's face before it is used in the workplace. Once a fit test has been done to determine the best respirator model and size for a particular user, a user seal check should be done every time the respirator is to be worn to ensure an adequate seal is achieved.

What Is a User Seal Check?

A user seal check is a procedure conducted by the respirator wearer to determine if the respirator is being properly worn. The user seal check can be a positive pressure or negative pressure check.

During a positive pressure user seal check, the respirator user exhales gently while blocking the paths for air to exit the facepiece. A successful check is when the facepiece is slightly pressurized before increased pressure causes outward leakage.

During a negative pressure user seal check, the respirator user inhales sharply while blocking the paths for air to enter the facepiece. A successful check is when the facepiece collapses slightly under the negative pressure that is created with this procedure.

A user seal check is sometimes referred to as a fit check. A user seal check should be completed each time the respirator is donned (put-on). It is only applicable when a respirator has already been successfully fit tested on the individual.

How Do I Perform a User Seal Check While Wearing a Filtering Facepiece Respirator?

Not every respirator can be checked using both positive and negative pressure. Refer to the manufacturer's instructions for conducting user seal checks on any specific respirator. This information can be found on the box or individual respirator packaging.

The following positive and negative user seal check procedures for filtering facepiece respirators are provided as examples of how to perform these procedures.

How to Do a Negative Pressure User Seal Check

Negative pressure seal checks are typically conducted on particulate respirators that have exhalation valves. To conduct a negative pressure user seal check, cover the filter surface with your hands as much as possible and then inhale. The facepiece should collapse on your face and you should not feel air passing between your face and the facepiece.

In the case of either type of seal check, if air leaks around the nose, use both hands to readjust the nosepiece by placing your fingertips at the top of the metal nose slip. Slide your fingertips down both sides of the metal strip to mold the nose areas more efficiently to the shape of your nose. Readjust the straps along the sides of your head until a proper seal is achieved.

If you cannot achieve a proper seal due to air leakage, you may need to be fit tested for a different respirator model or size.

Can a User Seal Check Be Considered a Substitute for a Fit Testing?

No. The user seal check does not have the sensitivity and specificity to replace either fit test methods, qualitative or quantitative, that are accepted by OSHA (29 CFR 1910.134). A user should only wear respirator models with which they have achieved a successful fit test within the last year. National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) data suggests that the added care from performing a user seal check leads to higher quality donning (e.g., reduces the chances of a donning with a poor fit).

Summary:

We must take respiratory protection equipment seriously. Improper care, wearing, maintenance and storage could lead to failure of equipment or worse--personal injury or death.

Remember, the care of this equipment affects the wearer.

RESPIRATOR SEAL CHECKING IS SERIOUS BUSINESS!

Safety Meeting Sign-In Sheet

Supervisor:	Subject:
Location:	Date:
Conducted By:	Trainer Signature:

Name (print clearly)	Signature	Comments / Safety Concerns / Training Requests