

# Proper Use of a Respirator

## Toolbox Talk

### Understand Respiratory Hazards



Dusts, fumes, gases or vapors, and temperature extremes can penetrate and damage your respiratory system. Dust and fumes can irritate your nose and throat, and in some cases, your lungs. Gases and vapors can be absorbed from your lungs into your

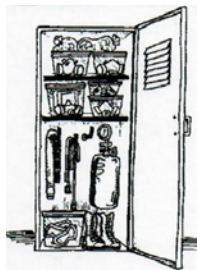
bloodstream, where they have the potential to damage your brain and internal organs. Very hot or cold air can damage the fine tissues in your mouth and airway and interfere with your normal breathing.

### Clean Your Respirator Regularly

Regular cleaning and inspection prolongs the respirator's useful life and assures you that it is working as efficiently as possible. For personal hygiene and communicable disease prevention, respirators should not be passed from one person to another without first being cleaned and sanitized.



### Store Respirators in Sealed, Dry Containers



When not in use, respirators should be stored to prevent conditions that can deform the face piece, and that protect it from excessive exposure to dust, sunlight, extreme temperatures, excessive moisture, or damaging chemicals. Plastic containers with lids can provide adequate storage for respirators.

### Inspect Respirators Maintained for Emergency Use At Least Monthly

Respirators maintained for emergency use, such as canister gas masks and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), should be inspected at least monthly to assure reliable operation when it is needed. All respirators should be inspected before each use to ensure cleanliness and that all components are present and operable.



### Breathing Through a Respirator Requires More Effort



Breathing through a respirator may require more effort than normal breathing. This effort can be difficult for some individuals, for various reasons. If you have a medical limitation that may interfere with your wearing a respirator, be sure to inform your supervisor. You may be

required to have an examination by your physician to determine if you are physically able to perform the work while wearing a respirator.

### Respirators Do Have Limits

Respirators cannot adequately protect a worker from all contaminants under all conditions. In general, the typical half-face air-purifying respirator can be used for protection in environments of up to 10 times the Permissible Exposure Level (PEL). However, the cartridges or canisters of air-purifying respirators have a limited capacity to protect against toxic gases and vapors in the air. If you detect an odor or taste, or feel your eyes or throat irritated, leave the hazardous area immediately and go to a safe area. The cartridge or canister on the respirator should be changed according to your employer's written cartridge-changing schedule, or when the cartridge's end-of-service-life changes color.



### Respirators Do Not Provide Oxygen



Air-purifying respirators (canisters or cartridges) do not provide oxygen. They should not be used in situations where the oxygen content in the air is questionable.

### Make Sure the Respirator Fits Snugly on Your Face

Only a secure and snug fit protects you, so make sure you have the right size respirator for your face. The shape of your face, facial hair and condition of your skin can affect your fit. Try various sizes until you find one where air does not leak in around the edges. You can test the respirator fit by placing the palms of your hands over the cartridges and breathing in for 10 seconds. If fitted properly, the mask should suck in tightly around your face.



Source: Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation

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