



# COMPLIANCE TIP

## Respiratory Protection

OSHA requires that employer's first attempt to remove respiratory hazards using engineering and administrative controls. Engineering controls may include the replacement of hazardous substances with non-hazardous substances or the introduction of ventilation systems. Examples of administrative controls may include the reduction in exposure through procedures that limit the time employee's work in hazardous environments or other written procedures that effectively control the hazard.

If it is not feasible to introduce engineering or administrative controls, personal protective equipment (respirators) may be used. When respirators are used, regardless of need, a **Respiratory Protection Program** must be established.

If a respirator is not needed and an employee chooses to wear one, the employer may only comply with certain provisions of the standard. Employees who voluntarily wear respirators must receive a medical screening and a copy of Appendix D, "Information for Employees Using Respirators When Not Required Under the Standard". Training must be provided only to ensure the respirator is maintained in sanitary condition so it does not present an additional health hazard.

### ACTIONS

Employers cannot simply hand out a respirator for protection against hazardous atmospheres. The proper selection, fit, use and maintenance of respirators are critical. An effective Respirator Program must be established for each work site with procedures specific to the conditions present.

- **Program Administrator**  
Select a program administrator to manage and implement the program. This should be a qualified person with the required training and authority.
  
- **Hazard Identification**  
Identify respiratory hazards in the workplace. Review the list of hazardous chemicals, material safety data sheets and processes to identify sources respiratory hazards.
  
- **Hazard Evaluation**  
Perform a Hazard Evaluation to determine methods of controls that can be used to protect workers from the respiratory hazards.
  
- **Selecting An Approved Respirator**  
Based on the evaluation, select an approved respirator. Vendors can play an important role in helping you select the proper respirator. You must also develop a means for workers to determine when it is necessary to change cartridges. Many respirator vendors provide on-line calculators to assist in this process.

Vendors can also play another role in the respirator selection process. They provide an opportunity for workers to try different size and model devices to ensure an effective fit can be achieved.



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- **Develop A Written Respiratory Protection Program**

Develop a written Respiratory Protection Program. The program must contain all the elements established under the standard. These include the procedures for inspection, use, cleaning, disinfecting, and storage

- **Medical Screening**

Workers must be medically fit to wear a respirator. A state licensed health care professional must perform a medical evaluation using an OSHA approved questionnaire.

Workers who do not pass the evaluation process will need a physical examination by a licensed physician before than can use a respirator on the job.

- **Fit Testing Respirators**

A Fit Test must be performed on each worker to ensure the respirator is properly fit and providing the necessarily protection. These tests can be by qualified workers. However, most employers choose to allow the respirator vendor to provide this service for a small fee. This test must be conducted at least annually.

- **Issuance of Respirators**

Employers should record the issuance of respirator to qualified workers. The record should include date like the date of issuance, make and model of respirator, NIOSH certification number, as well as cartridge and fit testing information.

- **Information and Training**

The Respiratory Protection standard has many information and training requirements. The training should be competency based to ensure the workers can effectively and safely use respirators on the job.

- **Program Evaluation**

You should routinely evaluate the effectiveness of your Respirator Protection Program. This evaluation should be done at least annually unless you detect a deficiency that needs to be addressed sooner.

*Materials to assist you in addressing these requirements can be found in the eSafetyLine Software. The application provides compliance guides, training guides, checklists, model documents and training materials. The software also provides a data base and report generator to assist you in meeting the recordkeeping and reporting requirements of the standard.*