

Everyday Safety

Tailgate Talks

Proper Use of Respirators

This Everyday Safety Tailgate Talk is written using information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

Respirators are an effective method of protection against designated hazards when properly selected and worn. Respirator use is encouraged, even when exposures are below the exposure limit, to provide an additional level of comfort and protection for workers. However, if a respirator is used improperly or not kept clean, the respirator itself can become a hazard to the worker. Sometimes, workers may wear respirators to avoid exposures to hazards, even if the amount of hazardous substance does not exceed the limits set by OSHA standards. If your employer provides respirators for your voluntary use, or if you provide your own respirator, you need to take certain precautions to be sure that the respirator itself does not present a hazard.



You should do the following:

1. Read and heed all instructions provided by the manufacturer on use, maintenance, cleaning and care, and warnings regarding the respirators limitations.
2. Choose respirators certified for use to protect against the contaminant of concern. NIOSH, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, certifies respirators. A label or statement of certification should appear on the respirator or respirator packaging. It will tell you what the respirator is designed for and how much it will protect you.
3. Do not wear your respirator into atmospheres containing contaminants for which your respirator is not designed to protect against. For example, a respirator designed to filter dust particles will not protect you against gases, vapors, or very small solid particles of fumes or smoke.
4. Keep track of your respirator so that you do not mistakenly use someone else's.

Hanover Testing Labs



Types of Respirators:



Protect Yourself Respirators

Respiratory protection must be worn whenever you are working in a hazardous atmosphere. The appropriate respirator will depend on the contaminant(s) to which you are exposed and the protection factor (PF) required. Required respirators must be NIOSH-approved and medical evaluation and training must be provided before use.

Single-strap dust masks are usually not NIOSH-approved. They must not be used to protect from hazardous atmospheres. However, they may be useful in providing comfort from pollen or other allergens.



Approved filtering facepieces (dust masks) can be used for dust, mists, welding fumes, etc. They do not provide protection from gases or vapors. **DO NOT USE FOR ASBESTOS OR LEAD**; instead, select from the respirators below.



Half-face respirators can be used for protection against most vapors, acid gases, dust or welding fumes. Cartridges/filters must match contaminant(s) and be changed periodically.



Full-face respirators are more protective than half-face respirators. They can also be used for protection against most vapors, acid gases, dust or welding fumes. The face-shield protects face and eyes from irritants and contaminants. Cartridges/filters must match contaminant(s) and be changed periodically.



Loose-fitting powered-air-purifying respirators (PAPR) offer breathing comfort from a battery-powered fan which pulls air through filters and circulates air throughout helmet/hood. They can be worn by most workers who have beards. Cartridges/filters must match contaminant(s) and be changed periodically.



A Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) is used for entry and escape from atmospheres that are considered immediately dangerous to life and health (IDLH) or oxygen deficient. They use their own air tank.



Resources and References:

OSHA Videos on the Voluntary Use of Respirators

https://www.osha.gov/video/respiratory_protection/voluntaryuse.html

Food and Drug Administration Webpage on N-95 Respirators and Surgical Face Masks

<https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/personal-protective-equipment-infection-control/n95-respirators-and-surgical-masks-face-masks>

OSHA Respiratory Protection Webpage

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/respiratoryprotection/>

CDC National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health Respirator Webpage

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/respirators/default.html>

