

## Respirator User Basic Requirements

### OSHA Respiratory Protection Standard 29 CFR 1910.134

(a)(2) Respirators shall be provided by the employer when such equipment is necessary to protect the health of the employee. The employer shall provide the respirators which are applicable and suitable for the purpose intended. The employer shall be responsible for the establishment and maintenance of a respiratory protection program which shall include the requirements outlined in paragraph (c) of this section.

#### **If an employer requires the use of respirators it is necessary for the employer to provide:**

- 1. Medical evaluations of employees required to use respirators;*
- 2. Fit testing for tight-fitting respirators;*
- 3. Training of employees in the respiratory hazards to which they are potentially exposed during routine and emergency situations;*
- 4. Training of employees in the proper use of respirators, including putting on and removing them, any limitations on their use, and their maintenance.*

(c)(2) Where respirator use is not required:

**(c)(2)(i)** An employer may provide respirators at the request of employees or permit employees to use their own respirators, if the employer determines that such respirator use will not in itself create a hazard. If the employer determines that any voluntary respirator use is permissible, the employer shall provide the respirator users with the information contained in Appendix D to this section ("Information for Employees Using Respirators When Not Required Under the Standard" [included at the end of this document]); and

**(c)(2)(ii)** In addition, the employer must establish and implement those elements of a written respiratory protection program necessary to ensure that any employee using a respirator voluntarily is medically able to use that respirator, and that the respirator is cleaned, stored, and maintained so that its use does not present a health hazard to the user. **Exception: Employers are not required to include in a written respiratory protection program those employees whose**

***only use of respirators involves the voluntary use of filtering facepieces (dust masks).***

**If an employer allows voluntary use of respirators it is necessary for the employer to provide:**

- 1. Medical evaluations of employees using respirators;*
- 2. Training of employees in the proper use of respirators, including putting on and removing them, any limitations on their use, and their maintenance.*

***The above requirements do not pertain to the voluntary use of filtering facepieces (dust masks). No respiratory protection program is required and no other requirements apply.***

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#### **Appendix D to Sec. 1910.134 (Mandatory) Information for Employees Using Respirators When Not Required Under the Standard**

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 respirator.

[63 FR 1152, Jan. 8, 1998; 63 FR 20098, April 23, 1998]

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**The Definition of Filtering Facepiece is:** (dust mask) means a negative pressure particulate respirator with a filter as an integral part of the facepiece or with the entire facepiece composed of the filtering medium. Examples include the following:



A 95 filtering facepiece    A 95 filtering facepiece    A 100 filtering facepiece

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**The Definition of Voluntary Use is:** Voluntary use is when an employee chooses to wear a respirator, even though the use of a respirator is not required by either you or by any OSHA standard.

*There is no definition for the term "voluntary use" in the OSHA standard, the above definition came from OSHA's "Small Business Entity Guide" page C3.*