

It is not enough just to slap on a respirator and go. You need to know the reasons for the use of respirators, how they protect you, their limitations, how to use them, how to keep them in good condition and store them.

In fact, training is required for anyone who wears a respirator to protect your health. If you don't know how to use a respirator properly, you can get a false sense of protection.

One person must be designated as the respirator program administrator. This person is responsible for overseeing the respirator program.

**Respirator Program and Guide**



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The respirator program administrator is responsible for making sure wearers have medical evaluations and training, and for managing the maintenance, repair and replacement of respirators.

A good resource for medical evaluation and fit testing is <https://www.respexam.com/>

When used properly, dust masks prevent the inhalation of dust in the air and protect the lungs. When you inhale, air is pulled through the dust mask and dust is captured on the outside of the mask.

Dust masks will leak if they don't fit your face properly. They don't filter out chemical vapors and are not adequate for heavy amounts of dust. Dust masks may not be suitable for highly toxic dusts.

Dust masks come in variety of styles and brands. Not all dust masks provide adequate protection for workplace dust.

Only NIOSH-approved dust masks can be used for protection against dust levels that exceed the PEL.

**N95/R95/P95** masks filter out 95% of dust particles

**N99/R95/P99** masks filter out 99% of dust particles

**N100/R100/P100** masks filter out 99.7% of dust particles

**N99 or N100 masks are recommended for very fine dust or dangerous dusts such as asbestos or silica.**

Single-strap dust masks are not NIOSH-approved. The NIOSH approval will be found printed directly on the mask or on the mask package or carton.

**Where Dust Masks Cannot Be Used**

- Exposure to chemical gases or vapors
- Dust levels more than 10 times the permissible exposure limit (PEL)
- Oxygen deficiency

Most people have no problem wearing a dust mask. But because some people can have problems, medical evaluations are required. They start with a confidential medical questionnaire. Medical evaluations must be done before any type of respirator is used. Medical exams are not required if employees "voluntarily" wear dust masks, that is, they bring their own dust masks to work and wear them even though they don't actually need them for protection from dust.

Exams are required if the employer requires employees to wear respirators.

The first step of a medical evaluation is a confidential medical questionnaire. A healthcare provider decides if you need a medical exam. Results are only used to determine if you are fit to wear a respirator.

Fit-testing is extremely important because without a tight fit, a respirator is nearly useless. You may think you are protected when, in fact, you are not if the respirator does not fit properly.

Beards are not allowed because they will always cause a respirator to leak around the edges. Even a day's growth of facial hair can cause a leak. Mustaches are usually okay, but goatees will usually cause the respirator to leak.

Fit-testing is not required for voluntary use of dust masks however you are required to have a voluntary respirator program.

**Voluntary Respirator Use**

If your employees wear respirators voluntarily you will need to complete a voluntary respirator program.



Voluntary Respirator Program.