



Respiratory Protection

Respiratory protection is mandated by Cal-OSHA for some exposures and may be a good option and prudent approach to further reducing exposures even when not required to do so by the regulations.

Respiratory protection devices may include N-95 masks (disposable “dust” masks), half-face air purifying masks (reusable elastomeric masks with cartridges and filters for different contaminants), or a self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA). The type of respiratory protection device needed will depend on several variables including the toxicity of the material, length of exposure, and engineered control measures. Use of respiratory protective equipment requires initial coordination and consultation with the EH&S Department and must follow the requirements of the Campus-specific Respiratory Protection Program. These requirements include training in the proper selection and use of respirators, understanding the nature of the air contaminant (gas/vapor or particulate), an evaluation of the concentration and duration of potential exposure, medical certification, and fit testing in the particular type of respirator you will be using.



General Guidelines

1. Consult with the EH&S Department and refer to the Campus-specific Respiratory Protection Program for use procedures and training requirements.
2. Never perform tasks that require respiratory protective equipment until after receiving respiratory protection training and passing all other requirements specified in the Respiratory Protection Program.
3. Consult with the EH&S Department for respiratory protection guidance when introducing a new chemical product.
4. Contact your instructor, supervisor, or the EH&S Department if you have any problems using the assigned respiratory protection devices.

Respiratory Use

1. Never enter an area that is suspected of having an oxygen deficiency.
2. Inspect the respiratory protection device for defects before each use.
3. Never wear a defective respiratory protection device.
4. Wear respiratory protective equipment appropriate for the exposure as required by law or by EH&S.
5. Wear N-95 dust masks when performing tasks that generate sawdust.
6. Ensure there are no items or materials, such as facial hair, long hair, a respirator strap, etc., between a tight fitting respiratory protective device and the sealing surface of the face. A good fit and seal must be obtained for the mask to function properly.

7. Complete a positive and negative user seal check after donning a tight fitting respirator to ensure the device is properly placed and sealed against the skin.
8. Follow guidance provided by EH&S for changing respirator cartridges and filters used to remove gases and vapors. Gas/vapor cartridges and filters should be changed before chemical breakthrough occurs, meaning the cartridge or filter should be changed before it becomes saturated and the chemical enters the mask
9. Immediately leave the exposure area if you smell or taste the contaminant the respirator was supposed to remove. Inform your supervisor and consult with EH&S on how to correct this problem.
10. Replace particulate filters and pre-filters designed to remove particles (dusts, mists, etc.) if breathing through them becomes difficult. Immediately report to your instructor or supervisor if changing the particulate filters or pre-filters does not relieve breathing difficulty.
11. Dispose of N95 dust masks according to guidance provided by your supervisor or EH&S or when they become damaged or excessively dirty.
12. Clean re-usable respiratory protection equipment in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
13. Never share respiratory protection devices with other users until the devices have been cleaned, sanitized, and dried in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
14. Store cleaned and sanitized respiratory protection devices in a manner that keeps them clean and in good condition. Store them in a sealed bag or container where they will not get deformed, away from extreme heat, sunlight, dirt, and debris. Do not hang them on a hook in the shop near your workbench.

Talk to your supervisor if you have any questions about this information.