

RESPIRATORY PROTECTION

A Breath Of Fresh Air

Each day, every one of us is exposed to some degree of contamination in the air we breathe—both at home and on the job. Some of the same substances that help improve our quality of life—chemicals for agriculture, fuel for our vehicles—can be toxic when we inhale them. Fortunately, you can protect yourself against respiratory hazards by following established safety guidelines and using appropriate personal protective equipment (respirators) when needed.

Respiratory Hazards

Unlike many other dangers, respiratory or breathing hazards, are often invisible. You may not be able to see, feel, or smell them. These hazards may take the form of smoke, fumes, dusts, mists, gases, vapors, or insufficient oxygen supply. The only way to determine the existence of these hazards is through thorough, periodic measuring. If your work exposes you to any of these hazards, your employer can provide environmental controls (such as ventilation and exhaust systems), safety guidelines, and personal protective equipment as needed.

Clearing the Air

If your job requires that you wear a respirator, your employer will provide the type of device best suited to protect against the particular hazard you face. Respirators function by filtering or purifying contaminated air, or by supplying fresh air from an outside source.



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There are a wide variety of respirators available, but it's important to realize that using the wrong respirator can be just as risky as using no respirator at all.

Caring For Your Respirator

Like any piece of equipment, your respirator requires care and upkeep in order to function correctly. Most manufacturers will provide cleaning and storage instructions for their particular product. Follow the manufacturer's guidelines carefully. Be sure to inspect your respirator before and after each use. Does the filter need to be replaced? Are all

clamps, straps, harnesses and valves in good condition? Are there any cracks in the face piece or elsewhere? If you find that your respirator is damaged, *do not use it*. Return your damaged respirator to your supervisor and request a replacement while yours is being repaired.

Air Care

When you care about the air you breathe, you care about respiratory protection. Don't take risks with your health and life—protect against breathing hazards for the health of it.