

Safe Use of Respirators

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INTRODUCTION

OSHA standard 29CFR 1910.34 outlines the requirements concerning the selection and use of respirators. When effective engineering controls are not technically feasible or while such controls are being instituted, approved respiratory equipment will be provided as necessary to protect the health of our employees.

ANNUAL PHYSICALS

- Employees required to wear respirators, will be given an annual physical by a physician to determine their physical capability to work while wearing a respirator.

The examination must include the following:

- Medical history with emphasis on the history and symptoms of respiratory system disease, cardiac disease, etc.
- Pulmonary Function Test - a determination of the Forced Vital Capacity (FVC) and Forced Expiratory Volume (FEV).
- Blood pressure elevation.
- Auscultation of the heart and lungs.
- The physician is to advise the results in writing to the safety representative.
- Employees will be notified of the examination results and their suitability to wear respiratory protective equipment.
- All employees must be examined annually to reevaluate their physical ability to continue to use respiratory protective equipment.

APPROVED RESPIRATORS

- Only OSHA/NIOSH approved respiratory protective equipment is to be used.
- Respirators are to be selected based on their ability to provide the necessary level of protection required. Respirator use and selection will be carefully reviewed by the safety representative and Safety Committee. Ongoing evaluations will be made at regular intervals. No respirator types will be allowed in use until their operation has been reviewed in advance and approved in writing by the plant safety representative.

EMPLOYEE TRAINING

- All employees shall be trained in the use, limitations, and care of respirators. Foremen/Supervisors will be responsible for ensuring the proper use, maintenance, and cleaning of the respirators.

Training shall include the following:

- * Instruction in the nature, extent and effects of respiratory hazards to which the employee may be exposed.
 - * A discussion of the respirator's capabilities and limitations.
 - * Instruction in the care of the respirator, daily cleaning methods, inspection prior to use, changing cartridges and filters, and proper storage.
 - * Instruction on the different types of respirators and how they work in different environmental conditions.
 - * Instruction and training in actual use of the respirator.
 - * Training in emergency use and emergency situations.
- Training will provide the user an opportunity to handle the respirator, have it fitted properly, test its face piece to face seal, wear it in normal air conditions, then wear it in actual exposure levels. All training is to be documented as to the date of training, information covered, names of trainees and the instructors.
 - Retraining of all employees required to wear respirators will be conducted annually and documentation of this training is required.

FIT TESTING

- All employees will be fit tested and receive instruction in how the respirator should be worn, how to adjust it and how to determine if it fits properly.
- Respirators shall not be worn when conditions prevent a good face seal, regardless of the type of respirator. Such conditions may be growth of beard or sideburns, facial irregularities, dentures (or absence of same), temple pieces on glasses. If a good fit test cannot be achieved, the employee will be restricted from assignments requiring respiratory protection.

INSPECTION & CLEANING

- Employees who are issued respirators are responsible for inspecting their respirator before each use, requesting or performing maintenance as needed and cleaning and sanitizing the respirator daily before or after each use.
- A clean sanitary location shall be provided for the storage of respirators.
- Foremen/Supervisors are responsible for checking the conditions of respirators at least once a week. Worn or deteriorated parts are to be replaced.
- Respirators used for emergency use such as self contained breathing devices shall be thoroughly inspected at least once each month. A record of the inspection results will be maintained.

PROGRAM REVIEW

- Appropriate surveillance of work area conditions and degree of employee exposure or stress shall be maintained.
- The respiratory protection program shall be reviewed on a regular basis to determine the continued effectiveness of the program.

If you have any safety related questions or concerns, please contact American Safety & Health Management Consultants, Inc., toll free at 1-800-356-1274.