

Disposable Respirators



Filtering face-piece respirators are disposable and come in various styles and designs to protect you from non-hazardous contaminants in the workplace. The filtering material in the disposable respirator can be made of cloth or paper that cleans the air as you breathe it to prevent you from inhaling irritating substances.

Some filtering face-piece respirators (dust masks) are used to control nuisance contaminants such as dust, non hazardous fibers, animal dander, and pollen. Other filtering face-piece respirators can have added features for use with infectious diseases, organic vapors, chemical fumes, and nuisance odors.

GUIDELINES

While disposable respirators are convenient, you should be aware of their use guidelines and limitations in order to wear them safely. Your disposable respirator should be certified by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Follow all of the manufacturer's instructions for respirator use and make sure you are medically fit to wear a disposable respirator before you use it.

Your disposable respirator should be designed for the work you will be doing and the materials you use. Choose the correct respirator by consulting the NIOSH certification on the package, or talking with your supervisor. Because disposable respirators are not tight-fitting, they should not be worn in hazardous atmospheres. If you will be using your disposable respirator in a hazardous environment to protect against infectious diseases or other chemical exposure, contact your supervisor or safety personnel to determine the additional procedures required for this use.



PROPER FIT

To wear a disposable respirator, hold it in your hands with the nosepiece up and place it over your nose and mouth. Pull the top strap over your head and position it above your ears. Pull the bottom strap over your head and position it at the back of your neck. If the respirator has a nose clamp, use both hands to pinch it evenly over your nose. Adjust the straps so that they fit comfortably and hold the respirator securely to your face. It is important to check that your disposable respirator fits properly each time you wear it. To fit test a disposable respirator, cup both of your hands over the mask and inhale. The mask should pull in toward your face. If the mask does not pull in, or if you feel air leaks around the edges of the mask, readjust the nose piece and straps and try again until you get a good fit.

Keep track of your disposable respirator and do not share it with other workers. Inspect it before and after each use. Replace the respirator if it develops holes, the straps break or loosen, or it becomes dirty and overly contaminated. Be sure to store your respirator in an area that is free of dirt and contaminants. If the disposable respirator gets splashed with chemicals or other liquid materials while you are working, exit the work area and remove it immediately. If it becomes difficult to breathe through the disposable respirator, exit the work area, throw it away, and replace it with a new respirator. Properly adjust and fit test the new disposable respirator before you re-enter the work zone.

This Alliant Risk Control Consulting fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice.

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