

Respirator Fit and Maintenance

Your respiratory safety on the job depends on you wearing a properly functioning and fitting respirator. Tell your supervisor if your respirator interferes with your ability to see, hear or be heard properly, if it restricts movement so that you can't safely do your job, or if it has any damaged or worn parts.

Checking the Fit

- ▶ Whether you use a full-face respirator or one that covers only your nose and mouth, choose a respirator that's the right size for you and feels comfortable.
- ▶ Don't try to make a respirator more comfortable or better-fitting by altering it in any way or repairing it with parts from another respirator.
- ▶ Follow instructions for putting it on, adjusting the straps if necessary.
- ▶ When a respirator fits properly, the soft, pliable edges of the mask will mold to form a seal to your face, preventing contaminated air from entering.
- ▶ Adjust disposable fiber masks by pinching the metal nose strip to fit around your nose.
- ▶ Make sure no hair sticks out from the edges of your face mask. Beards, mustaches and long sideburns can interfere with the seal.



Testing the Seal

Perform these tests each time you use your respirator. Enter your work area only if your respirator passes the tests. Some employers provide a test atmosphere of banana oil or irritating smoke that you'll detect if your mask is leaking.

Positive Pressure Test

Cover the exhalation valve so that air can't escape through it; then exhale gently. The mask will bulge and you should feel increased air pressure until you inhale or uncover the valve. This means that no air is escaping the mask.

Negative Pressure Test

Cover the air intake ports of the respirator with your palms and inhale. Not only should it be difficult to inhale, but the soft parts of the respirator should collapse inward toward your face and remain that way as long as you're inhaling. This means that no air is getting into the mask from the edges. If you feel air coming in, and the mask regains its shape, there's a leak that must be corrected before you use the respirator.

RESPIRATOR MAINTENANCE

- ▶ Test your respirator's fit regularly.
- ▶ Check filters, cartridges or canisters before each use.
- ▶ Regularly check for cracks, dents, holes, hardening and broken or worn straps or buckles.
- ▶ Replace elastic straps that have lost their stretch.
- ▶ Replace your respirator if the material around the edges has become hard and brittle.
- ▶ Replace cartridges or canisters, valves and hoses according to the manufacturer's guidelines.
- ▶ Avoid changing parts from one model to another.
- ▶ Use only approved parts.
- ▶ Make sure cartridges are threaded correctly into place.
- ▶ Do pressure tests after replacing cartridges or filters.
- ▶ Keep valves clean and functioning properly.
- ▶ Replace dry or cracked valves.
- ▶ Clean your respirator after each use.
- ▶ Wash in mild, soapy water and scrub with a soft brush.
- ▶ If sanitizing, leave your respirator in the solution for at least two minutes and rinse thoroughly.
- ▶ Never use solvents or harsh cleaning agents on rubber or plastic parts.
- ▶ Replace your disposable respirator when it becomes clogged or breathing becomes difficult.
- ▶ Store your respirator in a plastic bag away from sunlight and chemicals.
- ▶ Avoid placing objects on top of your respirator.