

EHS Guidance Sheet

Voluntary Use of Dust Masks

Employees who voluntarily use respirators must be provided with certain information by providing the employee with a copy of this guidance sheet or 29 CFR 1910.134 Appendix D. This information must be provided to any employee who voluntarily elects to use a filtering facepiece (dust mask, disposable paper type dust respirator) whether the respirator is provided by the supervisor/employer or by the employee at his/her own expense. Employees wearing tight fitting elastomeric respirators must enroll in the UI Respiratory Protection Program.



Half mask filtering facepiece
Dust Mask

Respirators provide effective protection when properly selected and worn. However, if a respirator is used improperly or not kept clean, the respirator itself can become a hazard to the worker. The following general guidelines will assist the user in proper respirator use:

1. Read and heed all instructions provided by the manufacturer on use, maintenance, cleaning and care, and warnings regarding the respirator's limitations.
2. Choose respirators certified for use to protect against the contaminant of concern. NIOSH, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, certifies respirators. A label or statement of certification should appear on the respirator or respirator packaging. It will tell you what the respirator is designed for and how much it will protect you.
3. Do not wear your respirator into atmospheres containing contaminants for which your respirator is not designed to protect against. For example, a respirator designed to filter dust particles will not protect you against gases, vapors or very small solid particles of fumes or smoke.
4. Keep track of your respirator so that you do not mistakenly use someone else's respirator.
5. Contact EHS prior to working in atmospheres that may contain respiratory hazards. EHS will evaluate the types and quantities of contaminants to determine if respirator use is required (contaminants are at or near occupational exposure limits) or voluntary. If occupational exposure limits may be exceeded without use of a respirator, use is no longer considered voluntary and employees must enroll in the UI Respiratory Protection Program.