OSHA OUTREACH COURSES

JOB AID

DUST MASK VOLUNTARY USE GUIDELINES US

Dust Mask – Voluntary Use Guidelines

For serious hazards, workers are REQUIRED to wear respirators for protection. This job aid focuses on good practices for the VOLUNTARY use of disposable dust masks and filtering facepiece respirators (FFRs).

Types of Respirators

A respirator is a device that protects you from inhaling airborne substances such as dust, vapors, gases and fumes. Respirators offer varying levels of protection, so it's important that you can tell the difference between the types and understand how each works.

Atmosphere-Supplying Respirators

Atmosphere-supplying respirators supply breathable air directly to the user from a source other than the hazardous atmosphere.

Because these respirators provide their own air, they don't have filters.

- Self-contained breathing apparatuses (SCBAs) use their own air tank to supply clean air and are used in toxic and oxygen-deficient atmospheres
- Air-line respirators provide clean, fresh air to the user from a stationary source, such as a compressor or compressed air cylinder

Air-Purifying Respirators (APRs)

Air-purifying respirators (APRs) have filters or cartridges that remove contaminants from the air as they pass through the air-purifying element before reaching the user. They can be full-face or half-masks with mechanical or chemical cartridges.

APRs do NOT protect against oxygen-deficient atmospheres because their canisters or cartridges do not provide clean air. APRs must not be selected for atmospheres that are toxic and immediately dangerous to your life or health. **Filtering facepiece respirators and dust masks are types of APRs.**

Filtering Facepiece Respirators (FFR)

A filtering facepiece respirator (FFR) is a particulate respirator that cleans particles out of the air as you breathe. While these are the most common respirators, they are also the least protective. They would be dangerous if used in situations that require more substantial masks.

A dust mask is a type of filtering facepiece respirator. The terms "dust mask" and "filtering facepiece respirator" are often used interchangeably

Filtering facepiece respirators:

- Have a filter as the main part of the facepiece
- Are designed and tested to meet standards, such as those set by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)
- Are marked with a rating such as KN95 or N95

- Have two loops for attaching to the face – one above the ear and one below

Dust masks:

- May not be certified by a testing agency
- May be voluntarily worn for comfort against non-toxic, nuisance dust • Often have one ear loop only
- Should not be relied upon for health and safety protection

Filtering facepiece respirators are classified by their:

- Efficiency at stopping small particles, from lowest to highest – 95, 99 or 100 • Level of resistance to the effects of oil – not resistant (N), resistant (R) or oil-proof (P)

For example, an N95 mask has the lowest level of efficiency and is most affected by the presence of oil mists. It is commonly available for voluntary use. Look for the mask's efficiency and oil resistance ratings and suggested use on the packaging. Look for the testing agency's logo or name on the mask itself or on the straps.

Surgical masks, medical masks, procedure masks and other face coverings usually do not prevent leakage around the edge of the mask when the user inhales. These masks are usually just intended to prevent the release of potential contaminants FROM THE USER into their immediate environment.

Selecting a Mask

If the use of respiratory protection is mandatory, your employer will have a qualified person select the appropriate type of protection you need.

FFRs may be **mandatory** when working around elevated levels of lead dust or silica dust. You might **voluntarily** wear a mask around nuisance dust during activities that produce nonhazardous dust like sanding, mowing or sweeping, or when you feel discomfort from low levels of pollen and other mild allergens.

To ensure that an FFR does not present a hazard:

- Read and follow all instructions provided by the manufacturer
- Be sure it bears a mark verifying it has been tested and meets PPE standards • Don't wear an FFR in atmospheres it's not designed for; FFRs are for dust, not for gases, vapors, fumes or smoke
- Keep track of your FFR so that you only use yours

Usage Guidelines

Some general guidelines for using a filtering facepiece respirator include: • Your employer needs to ensure that masks are not dirty or contaminated and that their use does not interfere with the ability to work safely

- Limit the use of filtering facepiece dust mask respirators to 8 hours (continuous or intermittent)
- Try different brands, models and sizes to get a comfortable fit
- People with pre-existing pulmonary or cardiovascular issues may have trouble wearing masks that restrict breathing. Discontinue use and notify others if you experience dizziness or difficulty breathing
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions:
    - Use ear loops correctly
    - Use both head straps for FFRs, making sure they are correctly positioned and adjusted
    - Make sure the facepiece is snug
    - Mold the nosepiece to your face

Care Guidelines

Store respirators where they're protected from damage, contamination, dust, sunlight, extreme temperatures, excessive moisture and damaging chemicals. **Inspect** respirators before use to ensure they are clean and have all parts. A filtering facepiece respirator should have two elastic straps, a moldable nosepiece and, if equipped, a functioning exhalation valve.

Discard respirators if they are or become soiled, contaminated or damaged or don't allow you to breathe freely.