

You and Your Respirator

If you work around hazardous substances- there could be danger in the air.

You may not see it or smell it, but dust, vapor, gas, or fumes may be hazardous to your health.

The proper respirator can:

- Keep you from inhaling dangerous substances
- Provide a separate air supply in work areas that may be immediately dangerous to life or health



Your respirator can prevent:

- Lung and tissue damage or irritation
- Respiratory diseases
- Cancer and other serious illnesses
- Even death



But it can protect you only if it is selected correctly and you wear and take care of it.

It is all in writing.

Your company has a written Respiratory Protection Program that spells out the details of respirator use. In it you will find:

- How to select the right respirator for job hazards
- What medical evaluations are required for respirator use
- How to test for a good fit each time you use your respirator
- Proper respirator use and maintenance
- Training you will need before you use a respirator

It is up to your organization to evaluate the hazards you will encounter on the job and provide the respirator for you.

It is your job to use the respirator correctly every time. Take advantage of training your company provides- it could save your life in an emergency.



So...Which respirator do you select?



There are two basic types of respirators.

1. Air purifying or filtering respirators are used when there is enough oxygen (19.5%), BUT it is contaminated and below the IDHL level. The respirator may filter out the dangerous materials or divert the air through a chemical that "scrubs" the air so you can breathe it. The respirator probably has a replacement filter.



Air-purifying respirators that protect you from gas, fume, or vapor hazards come with a replacement canister or cartridge. Because it filters out the specific chemicals in your workplace, selecting the right cartridge or canister is important.

These are color coded so you will not pick the wrong one. Recognizing when these filters are used up is absolutely essential!

2. Atmosphere supplying respirators are required when:
 - You have to work in a confined space
 - There is not enough oxygen.
 - Containment concentrations exceed cartridge/canister limits.
 - No cartridge/canister is effective against the contaminant.
 - When contaminant concentrations are IDLH



Atmosphere-supplying respirators may be face masks that are connected by a hose to a stationary air supply (air line). Or, they may be self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) with a portable air supply, such as scuba diving masks.

The amount of air you consume will vary, so you have to know how much you have left.