

Field Training

Respirators Voluntary Use When Not Required

Appendix D

OSHA Appendix D to 1910.134

Respirators are an effective method of protection against designated hazards when properly selected and worn. Respirator use is encouraged, even when exposures are below the exposure limit, to provide an additional level of comfort and protection for workers. However, if a respirator is used improperly or not kept clean, the respirator itself can become a hazard to the worker. Sometimes workers may wear respirators to avoid exposures to hazards, even if the amount of hazardous substance does not exceed the limits set by OSHA standards. If your employer provides respirators for your voluntary use, or if you provide your own respirator, you need to take certain precautions to be sure that the respirator itself does not present a hazard.

You should do the following:

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 fumes or smoke.
4. Keep track of your respirator so that you do not mistakenly use someone else's respirator.

Company information on respirators

1. **Wearing a respirator on a voluntary basis to lower nuisance contamination inhalation is just fine. As you know a dust mask is considered a respirator in the eyes of OSHA. We have those available to anyone that wants one. You may voluntarily use one anytime you want. They are not required for our work.**
2. **Never wear someone else's dust mask, face covering or respirator.**
3. **Keep track of your item. Mark it so no one else gets it by mistake.**
4. **Read the instructions for the item. If you do not understand the instructions, just ask.**
5. **Only use a respirator specifically for the substance you are trying to guard against. One type does not fit all purposes.**
6. **Each item must have the box marked with its purpose and certifications.**
7. **If dirty throw away and get another. Dirty masks are dangerous.**