

# Respirator Training

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

If you're worried about breathing toxic chemicals on the job, you can always put on a dust mask, right? (Show the crew the dust mask you brought to the meeting.)

Dust masks are good for keeping out most large particles of dust, but that's about all they do. They don't stop chemical fumes, vapors, or even very small dust particles.

Respirators are a lot more effective. They may not be the best way to prevent chemical exposure, but for many construction jobs they are the only practical way. Just wearing any old mask isn't enough. You have to use the right respirator for the job, it has to fit properly, and you have to be trained how to use it. Otherwise, you only have the illusion of protection.

You or a crewmember may want to add a personal story about the importance of respirators.

Next, discuss with the crew what chemical hazards at this particular job site may require respirators:

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## Ask the Crew these Questions

After each question, give the crew time to suggest possible answers. Use the information following each question to add points that no one mentions.

1. What are the different types of respirators?

There are many types. The kind you should use depends on the particular chemical you're exposed to, how much you're exposed to, and how long you'll be exposed.

- Air purifying respirators (APRs) filter chemicals from the air before you breathe it. They remove toxic fumes, vapors, and dust particles so small

that they could go through a dust mask. APRs use disposable filter cartridges. (Show the crew the APR you brought to the meeting.)

- Air supplied respirators (airline, respirators or SCBAs) have their own supply of air. You need them where an APR can't give you enough protection, or where there isn't enough oxygen. (If applicable, show the crew an air-supplied respirator.)

2. How do you find out if you need to wear a respirator, and which kind you need?

You can't always tell if you need a respirator from the odor, taste, or physical symptoms that a chemical causes. A chemical that doesn't smell bad, make your eyes water, or irritate your throat might still be dangerous. Some very hazardous chemicals don't produce these effects at all. These chemicals have poor warning properties.

The Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for the chemical product you're using may tell you if you need a respirator. MSDSs are required by law. They'll tell you the ingredients in a product and possible health hazards. Everyone working on the site has a right to see MSDS's.

If you need to use a respirator, the company is required to tell you and give you the right type.

3. If you use an APR, you need to use the right cartridge for the specific chemical you're exposed to. How can you be sure you have the right cartridge?

0. The cartridge label should tell you which chemicals it's designed for. There is also a color code on cartridges. Remember that a chemical may go right through a cartridge that's designed for some other chemical!
0. Use cartridges and replacement parts designed for your particular brand and model of respirator. Both sides of the respirator should have identical cartridges.
0. The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) or the National Institute should approve cartridges (and the respirator itself) for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Check the label.

On this job, we will be using \_\_\_\_APRs or \_\_\_\_ air supplied respirators.

For APRs, the type of cartridge we will be using is:

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The cartridge protects you from (type of chemical):

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The cartridge is color-coded:

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4. I'm going to read some statements. Tell me which are true, and which are false.

- If you're going to wear a respirator on the job, the company must give you a medical exam to make sure you can wear a respirator safely. (True)
- We must teach you how to use a respirator and take care of it. (True )
- Once you get a fit-test to make sure the respirator fits your face properly, you'll never need another fit test (False).
- You should be fit-tested at least once a year, and more often if you' re exposed to certain substances like asbestos (True).
- You can only wear the brand, model, and size of respirator that you are fit-tested for. (True)
- It's OK to wear a respirator if you have a beard, long mustache, or long sideburns. (False) They may interfere with the respirator seal.

5. What do you have to do every time you put a respirator on?

- Inspect the respirator. Make sure the face piece, straps, and valves are in good shape.
- Do a negative and positive pressure test as soon as you get it on.

Using the sample APRs you brought to the meeting, demonstrate a negative and a positive pressure test. If necessary, consult site safety personnel to learn this simple procedure. Also see the Glossary.

6. When should you change cartridges in your respirator?

- It depends on the cartridge type and the particular substance involved. On this job, the cartridges we use should be changed at least:  

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- In addition, change your cartridge if it gets hard to breathe through, if it gets wet, if you detect the odor of the chemical, or if you notice symptoms of chemical exposure.

7. How should you store a respirator when you're done using it?

- First clean it. Make sure it' s dry, and then store it in a plastic bag in a clean area.

- Don't take it off the job site with you if it may be contaminated.

8. What should you do if your respirator feels too hot or uncomfortable to wear?

- Some are more comfortable than others. You may need to try a different size, model, or type of respirator. (Remember you need to be fit-tested on the new respirator!)
- It may be possible to rotate job assignments, so you spend less time in areas where you need a respirator.
- Talk to me and we'll see what we can work out. Don't just quit wearing your respirator because it's uncomfortable! Discomfort is a lot better than serious illness.

### **OSHA Regulations**

Explain: OSHA requires most of the safety measures we've talked about. We have to take these precautions, it's the law. I have a Checklist of the OSHA regulations on respirators. If you'd like to know more, see me after the meeting. Also, OSHA requires our company to have a written Respiratory Protection Program. I have copies.

### **Company Rules**

Besides the OSHA regulations, we have some additional company rules about respirators. Discuss company rules:

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### **Comments from the Crew**

Ask the following: Do you have any other concerns about respirators? Do you see any problems on our job? (Let the steward answer first, if there is one.)

What about other jobs you've worked on? Have you had any experience with respirators that might help us work safer on this job?

### **GENERAL SAFETY REVIEW**

This is a time to review all safety concerns, not just today's topic. Keep your notes on this page before, during and after the safety meeting.

Are you aware of any safety hazards from any other crews? Point out any hazards other crews are creating that this crew should know about. Tell the crew what you intend to do about those hazards.

Do we have any other safety business? Discuss any past issues or problems. Report any progress of investigations and action taken.

Have there been any accidents, near misses or complaints? Discuss any accidents, near misses, and complaints that have happened since the last safety meeting. Also recognize the safety contributions made by members of the crew.

Please remember, we want to hear from you about any health and safety issues that come up. If we don't know about problems, we can't take action to fix them.

## **ENDING THE MEETING**

Circulate Sign-Off Form.

Assign one or more crew member(s) to help with next safety meeting.

Refer action items for follow-up.

Do you have any Safety Recommendations?

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Do you have any Job Specific Topics you would like us to discuss?

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Have you reviewed the M.S.D.S Sheet for this safety topic?

Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_ N/A\_\_\_\_

**Comments**

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**SAFETY TALK REVIEW**

**Written Program**

The company has a current, written Respiratory Protection Program.

**Respirator Use**

- 0. Respirators are always provided by the company and used by workers when contaminant levels may be above the OSHA permissible exposure limit (PEL) for any hazardous substance, or when working in any dangerous atmosphere.
- 0. Potentially hazardous exposures on this site, and type of respirator(s) required, have been identified.
- 0. Respirators are equipped with the right type of cartridges for the particular contaminant.
- 0. Paper dust masks are not used to control exposure to asbestos or other toxic chemicals.
- 0. Air supplied respirators (not air purifying respirators) are worn in low oxygen areas.
- 0. Workers wearing respirators are clean-shaven at the points of seal.
- 0. Workers perform positive and negative pressure tests each time they put a respirator on.
- 0. The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) or the National Institute has approved respirators, cartridges, and replacement parts for Occupational Safety and Health.
- 0. Workers who wear respirators have been medically evaluated, fit-tested, and trained.

**Airline Respirators**

- 0. Breathing air is Grade D and free from any harmful substances.

- 0. If a compressor is used, it is equipped with OSHA required safety and standby devices, including an alarm, which signals system failure.
- 0. Breathing gas cylinders are labeled with the words AIR or OXYGEN.
- 0. Airline couplings are unique (incompatible with other outlets) to prevent accidentally connecting the respirator to hazardous gases.

## **Respirator Care**

- 0. Respirators are stored in impermeable bags out of the work area when not in use. (Impermeable plastic, wood, or metal boxes are also permissible.)
- 0. Respirators are cleaned prior to storage.
- 0. Cartridges are replaced on a routine basis, as specified in the company's written Respiratory Protection Program.
- 0. Workers inspect respirators for damage prior to each use.
- 0. Workers don't wear respirators with damaged straps or face pieces.
- 1. Replacement parts are obtained only from the original manufacturer or authorized vendor, and are designed for that respirator.