Written respiratory protection program: a respiratory protection toolbox talk

29 CFR 1910.134

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

When you put on a respirator, how do you know it is the right one for the job and that it is actually sealing to your face?

Why it matters

Dust, fumes, mists, gases and vapors can damage your lungs, sometimes without any warning you can see or smell. Controlling the hazard at the source comes first, with ventilation, water or a safer product. When a respirator is still needed, it only protects you if it is the right type, fits your face and is worn and cared for the right way.

Key points

1. **Use the respirator picked for the hazard**
   Your employer must select a respirator based on the hazards you are exposed to and the workplace and user factors that affect how well it works. A dust mask is a particle filter, so it does not protect you from gases or vapors, like solvent or paint vapors. If the product, the task or the air changes, ask before you keep using the same respirator.
   29 CFR 1910.134(d)(1)(i)

2. **Know your written program**
   Where respirators are needed to protect workers' health, or the employer requires them, the employer must have a written respiratory protection program with procedures for this worksite. It covers how respirators are picked, medical evaluations, fit testing, proper use, cleaning and storage, and training. A qualified program administrator must run it (29 CFR 1910.134(c)(3)), so find out who that is on this job.
   29 CFR 1910.134(c)(1)

3. **Medical evaluation and fit test come first**
   Before you are fit tested or required to wear a respirator, your employer must provide a medical evaluation to check that you can use one (29 CFR 1910.134(e)(1)). A tight-fitting respirator also needs a fit test before you first use it, whenever you switch to a different facepiece size, style, model or make, and at least once a year. You do not pay for the respirator, the training or the medical evaluation (29 CFR 1910.134(c)(4)).
   29 CFR 1910.134(f)(2)

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4 **Seal check every time**

Do a user seal check each time you put on a tight-fitting respirator, the way you were trained. Your employer cannot let you wear one if facial hair comes between the face seal and your skin or gets in the way of the valves (29 CFR 1910.134(g)(1)(i)). Even stubble can keep the facepiece from sealing.

29 CFR 1910.134(g)(1)(iii)

5 **Leave if it stops protecting you**

Leave the area if you smell or taste the contaminant, if breathing gets harder or if the facepiece leaks. Your employer must make sure you leave the respirator area for those reasons, and also to wash your face or to change the filters or cartridges. Do not go back in until the respirator has been repaired or replaced (29 CFR 1910.134(g)(2)(iii)).

29 CFR 1910.134(g)(2)(ii)

6 **Inspect, clean and store it right**

Respirators used for routine work must be inspected before each use and during cleaning. Look over the facepiece, straps, valves and cartridges or filters, and report anything cracked, stiff or worn. Store it clean and protected from dust, sunlight, extreme temperatures, moisture and chemicals, packed so the facepiece and valve do not get bent out of shape (29 CFR 1910.134(h)(2)(i)).

29 CFR 1910.134(h)(3)(i)(A)

Scenario

Picture this: A painter grabs a dust mask from the truck before spraying a solvent-based coating in a small room with poor airflow. He has a beard and has never been fit tested. After a while he feels dizzy and can smell the solvent, but he figures the job is almost done and keeps going. What went wrong before he even started, and what should he do right now?

Crew discussion

1. Which tasks on this job need a respirator, and which type does each one need?
2. Who runs our respiratory protection program, and where can you see the written program?
3. When were you last fit tested, and on which respirator model and size?
4. What would you do if you smelled the chemical through your respirator?

Bottom line **Wear the respirator chosen for the hazard, make sure it fits and seals every time, and leave the area the moment it stops protecting you.**

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Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema Respiratory protection / Protección respiratoria

Date / Fecha _____

Trainer / Instructor _____ Location / Lugar _____ Company / Empresa _____

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