

VOLUNTARY USE OF RESPIRATORS (FILTERING FACEPIECE)

[Guide to Respiratory Protection at Work](#)

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 designated to protect against. For example, a respirator designed to filter dust particles will not protect you against gases, vapors or very small solid particles of fumes or smoke.
 4. Keep track of your respirator so that you do not mistakenly use someone else's respirator.
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- Steps to Properly Wear a Respirator (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oU4stQgCtV8>)
 - Cup the respirator in your hand, with the nosepiece at your fingertips, allowing the headbands to hang freely below your hand (Fig. 2).
 - Position the respirator under your chin with the nosepiece up. Pull the top strap over your head resting it high at the top back of your head. Pull the bottom strap over your head and position it around the neck below the ears (Fig. 3).
 - Place your fingertips from both hands at the top of the metal nosepiece. Using two hands, mold the nose area to the shape of your nose by pushing inward while moving your fingertips down both sides of the nosepiece (Fig. 4). Pinching the nosepiece using one hand may result in improper fit and less effective respirator performance. Use two hands.
- Perform a User Seal Check prior to each wearing (after donning respirator)
 - Place your fingertips from both hands completely over the respirator and exhale sharply. Be careful not to disturb the position of the respirator (Fig. 5).
 - If air leaks around the nose, readjust the nosepiece until there is no leakage.
 - If air leaks at the respirator edges, work the straps back along the sides of your head until there is no leakage.

Note: Facial hair interferes with a proper seal

