

TOOLBOX TALK - COVID-19 AND RESPIRATOR USAGE

Personal protective equipment is helpful to prevent transmission of COVID-19. Respirators are not normally recommended for social distancing purposes but may be appropriate where workers must be in close proximity to others.

These recommendations are meant to enhance social distancing recommendations to stay more than 6 feet from other people and practice good hand hygiene.

In some cases, where workers cannot avoid being in close proximity with other people, a respirator may be needed for protection. These guidelines in no way replace the required use of respirators needed to protect employees from exposure to other hazards during job tasks or activities.

Respiratory hazards in the workplace should be controlled whenever possible using engineering, work practice, or administrative controls. However, if these controls are not feasible or do not provide sufficient protection, employees may need to utilize respiratory protection. Employees who are required to use respiratory protection must be properly trained.



Respiratory Hazards

- Biological hazards (COVID-19, tuberculosis, whooping cough, flu viruses)
- Harmful dusts (lead, silica, and other heavy metals)
- Fumes and smokes (welding fume)
- Gases and vapors (chemical exposures)
- Oxygen deficiency (oxidation, displacement, and consumption)

Respirator Types

- Air-Purifying Respirators (APR) clean the air you breathe using filters, cartridges, or canisters. APRs include half face, full face, N95, and PAPR respirators.
- Atmosphere Supplying Respirators supply the user with breathing air from a source independent of the ambient atmosphere.
- Supplied Air Respirators (SAR) and Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) are examples of atmosphere supplying respirators.



Respirator Basics

- Perform initial fit-tests for each worker with the same model, style, and size respirator that the worker will be required to wear for protection against COVID-19 and all other airborne hazards.
- Initial fit-testing is essential to determine if the respirator properly fits the worker and is capable of providing the expected level of protection.
- Use only NIOSH-certified respirators or approved foreign equivalents
- Explain to workers the importance of performing a user seal check (i.e., a fit check) at each donning to make sure they are getting an adequate seal from their respirator, in accordance with the procedures outlined in WAC 296-842-22020, Follow procedures established for seal checking respirators.