

Respirator Basics

1

Choose the right respirator.



There are many kinds of respirators available. To choose the right one for the job, read the MSDS for the controlled substance to which you will be exposed. If it doesn't say, or if there's no MSDS, refer to the Respirator Chart in IHSA's *Construction Health and Safety Manual* or consult the manufacturer.

2

Use NIOSH-approved filters.



Make sure your filters are all approved by NIOSH (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health). Follow the manufacturer's instructions and keep them for future reference.

3

Get a fit test.



Get a "fit test" by a qualified person who is trained to do it. The test checks if the respirator fits your face properly. The tester should use a procedure that complies with the latest version of CSA Standard Z94.4.

4

Inspect the respirator.



Inspect your respirator for defects, cracking, and areas that are wearing out. If there's a problem, don't use it. Tell your supervisor.

5

Make sure you're clean-shaven.



You must be clean-shaven to wear the kind of respirator that requires a tight seal with your face. Any facial hair, even short stubble, can negatively affect the seal.

6

Adjust the respirator.



Adjust the facepiece and the straps so that the respirator fits your face snugly. There must be a good seal between the respirator and your face.

7

Do a negative-pressure seal check.



How to do a negative-pressure seal check:

- ▶ Block the filter inlets with your hands.
- ▶ Inhale and hold for 5 seconds.
- ▶ The mask should collapse slightly, but it should not allow air into the facepiece.
- ▶ If there's a leak, try it again. If there's still a leak, don't use the respirator. Tell your supervisor.

8

Do a positive-pressure seal check.



How to do a positive-pressure seal check (after doing the negative-pressure seal check):

- ▶ Block the exhaust port with your hand.
- ▶ Exhale for 5-10 seconds.
- ▶ The mask should expand outward slightly, but it should not allow air to escape.
- ▶ If there's a leak, try it again. If there's still a leak, don't use the respirator. Tell your supervisor.
- ▶ If there is no leak, you can start work.

9

Fit a filtering facepiece respirator.



If you're using a filtering facepiece respirator:

- ▶ Pinch the metal nose clip so that it forms a tight seal to your nose.
- ▶ Adjust the respirator until you feel that there's a good fit.
- ▶ Get a fit test (see #3). If there is a leak, don't use the respirator. Tell your supervisor.
- ▶ If there is no leak, you can start work.

10

Clean the respirator.



When you've finished your work, follow the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning the respirator facepiece. This usually means:

- ▶ Removing the cartridges and filters
- ▶ Immersing the facepiece in warm water with a mild detergent
- ▶ Cleaning it with soft brush or sponge
- ▶ Rinsing it in warm water, then air drying.

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Store the respirator.



Store your respirator according to the manufacturer's instructions. Store it in a clean area away from dust, chemicals, sunlight, heat, extreme cold, excessive moisture, tools, and equipment.

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For more information and details, see the section on Respiratory Protection in IHSA's *Construction Health and Safety Manual*. You can order or download it at ihsa.ca or call 1-800-263-5024