

What Pieces of PPE are Considered Respirators?

The Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2020 gives a definition on respirators and more specifically air-purifying respirators. “Respiratory protective device” means a device that is designed to protect a wearer from inhaling a hazardous atmosphere, and includes;

- atmosphere-supplying respirators
- air-purifying respirators
- escape respirators

“Air-purifying respirator” means a respirator that removes airborne contaminants from the air inhaled by a worker.

What does this have to do with “dust masks”? And why do we need to know?

When it comes to those disposable dust masks you use on site, there is a misunderstanding as to what they are defined as under standards.

- That box of “dust masks” you supply to your workers are known as Filtering Face-piece Respirators (example: N95’s).
- They are actually held to the same requirements as your Elastomeric Half Face Piece Respirator, meaning they too need to have a fit test completed.

What type of fit test do I need?

A fit test is to be conducted, it may be either qualitative or quantitative test. However a quantitative may be a preferred method as it offers you the ability to social distance while conducting.

Reminder: Important to be clean shaven. Fit tester needs to be competent and test needs to be conducted in an approved manner.

Is it just a 2 year fit test? Are there any other stipulations?

When it comes to fit testing, yes two years is the minimum requirement. However, if you were fit tested on a certain

brand half mask respirator and you switch to a different brand, size or style, you will need to get re-fit tested on that new mask.

The only disposable face masks that do not require a fit test are the disposable fabric or reusable cloth loose fitting masks.

How are these disposable respirators rated?

NIOSH sets requirements. N, R, P series all keep out particulates only (not gases or vapours)

- stands for non-oil
- R is oil resistant
- P is oil proof
 - (oil, meaning oil particles in air that would break down the filter)
- The “95” (or other) number refers to the efficiency of the filter.
 - This number may range from 95 to 100

Can I wash/ re-use Disposable Respirators?

There is no recognized method to clean a disposable respirator. The elastics can stretch and change the fitting, as well as the wash technique can change the efficiency rating. Check manufacturer’s specifications. If you take mask off and put it back on, you can cross contaminate.

Remember:

Respirators are PPE- which is last line of defense. More effective controls are: social distancing, washing/ sanitizing hands, and staying at home.

Resources:

Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety Regulations

CDC & NIOSH -

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/Respiratory-Protection-Week-2019.html>

Tool Box Talk

When accidents and incidents happen on the jobsite, we are always quick to point the finger at lack of training, not following practices or procedures, or even improper supervision. The idea that the hazards and dangers associated with the job were not properly communicated to all of the workers is often missed.

Tool Box Talks can go by many names, and although formats may vary, these meetings all serve one purpose: to inform employees and contract workers. Tool Box Talks are short, informal, meetings between management and the workers on a jobsite. The goal of these meetings is to reinforce current safe job procedures, inform workers of new and/or relevant procedures, review recent safety violations/incidents, and ensure workers are up-to-date on the information required to complete their work safely.

Always use a Tool Box Talk form to record the meeting topic, date, who was in attendance, and any follow-up actions to be taken. Not only do these forms help with consistency of record keeping, but they also ensure that nothing is missed. At the end of the meeting have management sign off on the form.

One of the most important aspects of a Tool Box Talk is giving workers an opportunity to voice their concerns and ask questions. All employees have a right to participate in health and safety as it relates to their work and it is the supervisor or manager's responsibility to create an environment for them to do so. Once the meeting is over, and the form is filled out, it should be filed with other documented Tool Box Talks.

Remember that Tool Box Talks are short and informal, they are not meant to be intimidating. Use the opportunity to have fun and stay on top of what is necessary to keep safety culture a strong part of the business.

For a full listing of Tool Box Talk topics, visit: www.scsaonline.ca/resources/tool-box-talks

For a copy of the Tool Box Talk form, visit: www.scsaonline.ca/pdf/Tool_Box_Meeting.pdf

About the Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association

The Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association (SCSA) is an industry-funded, membership-based, nonprofit organization that provides cost-effective, accessible safety training and advice to employers and employees in the construction industry throughout the province to reduce the human and financial losses associated with injuries. Registered March 20, 1995, the SCSA is, and has been since inception, committed to injury prevention. Serving almost 10,000 member companies with business offices in both Regina and Saskatoon, the major business units of the association are Advisory Services, Business Development, Corporate Services, Program Services and Training. The mission of the SCSA is constructing safety leadership in Saskatchewan and the vision is to create the safest construction environment in Canada.