

Overview: Respirators protect workers against hazards such as insufficient oxygen environments, harmful dusts, fogs, smokes, mists, gases, vapours and sprays. These hazards have the potential to cause both immediate and long-term effects such as lung impairment, cancer, other diseases or even death. Employers should have a written respirator program that describes the proper procedures for selecting, fit testing, training, using, caring, cleaning and sanitizing, inspecting and record keeping, storing and operating respiratory protective equipment.

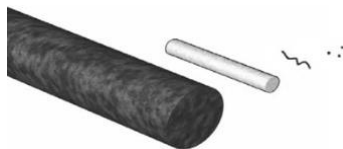
Fit Testing: For proper protection, a worker must ensure the respirator they are using fits and functions properly. Meaning the equipment must be the proper size and seal to the face. A fit test is to be conducted by a person properly trained in fit testing to ensure the correct size. A fit test is required before a worker uses any respirator for the first time, then must also be conducted on at least an annual basis. Fit tests may need to be performed more frequently if there has been changes to a workers body such as a significant gain or loss in weight, or facial changes such as dentures or broken jaw bone.

Seal Check: A seal check is to be performed by the worker prior to use of the respirator every time it is used. Use the positive and negative seal tests outlined in the respirator safety manual to verify the seal. Regular seal checks are necessary to ensure that contaminated air or particles will not leak into the respirator. If it doesn't fit or seal properly, don't use it!

Facial Hair and Respirators: It is critical to your personal health and wellbeing to ensure that you have a proper seal when wearing a respirator for protection. This means that workers need to be clean shaven before their shift begins, and possibly part way through, as beards, sideburns, moustaches, and stubble prevent a good seal and are not permitted with respirator use.

Particulate Size (Left to Right):

1. Human Hair
2. Glass Insulation Fibre
3. Asbestos Fibre
4. Fume Particles



Facial hair is much larger than the size of particulate you are trying to protect yourself from. If you do not have a

proper seal due to facial hair, you won't be properly protected as smaller particles such as fibres and fumes will be able to pass through

Choosing The Right Respirator: Choosing the right respirator to protect workers from airborne contaminants is essential. Respirators may not protect you from all contaminants as different contaminants require different protection. There are limitations for each type of respirator and you must be familiar with them prior to using them.

General precautionary information can be found in the manufacturer's operating manual. However, it may be necessary to seek the assistance of an experienced safety professional or occupational hygienist who is familiar with the actual workplace environment and contaminants.

Types Of Respirators

- Disposable particulate respirators provide minimum protection and are typically used to protect against nuisance dusts and fumes.
- Full mask and half mask air purifying respirators use cartridges and particulate filters. Air purifying respirators only work if you use the right cartridge and/or filter for the specific contaminant. Mechanical filters will block solid particles, while chemical filters soak up substances.
- Supplied air respirators can come in a variety of forms such as self contained breathing apparatuses, air hoods, full body suits, and airlines or work packs.

The Key To Respiratory Safety

It is vital to recognise all the chemicals, materials and hazards you may be exposed to, as well as conducting frequent hazard assessments and workplace inspections to help identify and control those hazards.

A plan must be implemented to protect the health of all workers by assessing the environment, implementing engineering controls, having safety data sheets available, choosing the right respiratory protection and other personal protective equipment for the specific hazards.

Protect your health and familiarize yourself with the Occupational Health & Safety Regulations: Section 7-3, Respiratory protective devices; Section 7-4. Inspection of respiratory protective devices.

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.