



RESPIRATOR USE REQUIREMENTS

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Respirators can be an effective tool to protect employees from airborne contaminants, but they can also lead to injuries and/or illnesses if used improperly. To ensure employees' safety, Cal/OSHA has extensive requirements for the use of respirators (see <http://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/5144.html>). The purpose of this bulletin is to highlight some of the requirements.

IMPORTANT CAL/OSHA RESPIRATORY PROTECTION REQUIREMENTS*	
Requirement	Comments
Use engineering controls whenever feasible to keep airborne contaminant concentrations below Cal/OSHA Permissible Exposure Limits (PELs).	Respirators should be utilized only after determining that engineering controls (e.g. ventilation, enclosure of the operation, substitution of less toxic materials) are ineffective or too burdensome.
Develop written respiratory protection program.	Must address nine elements, including worksite-specific procedures.
Designate qualified program administrator.	Administrator must be thoroughly familiar with Cal/OSHA's respiratory protection standard.
Select appropriate respirators.	Employer must evaluate respiratory hazards, develop reasonable estimate of airborne contaminant concentrations, and select respirators that provide adequate protection.
Determine acceptable respirator cartridge change-out schedules.	Employer must calculate how often cartridges must be replaced based on variables including worker breathing rate, contaminant concentration, and cartridge capacity.
Assume atmosphere is Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health (IDLH) when contaminant concentrations cannot be reasonably estimated.	IDLH atmospheres require the most sophisticated respirators and procedures. Typically, only firefighters or law enforcement personnel would enter these atmospheres.
Provide employee medical evaluations.	Required before respirators are used and as necessary on an ongoing basis.
Perform testing of seal between respirator and employee's face.	Required annually.
Provide employee training.	Required annually.
Recordkeeping.	Fulfillment of requirements must be documented.

* Filtering facepieces (dust masks) may be used on a voluntary basis (i.e. not for Cal/OSHA compliance) with relatively few requirements. Please contact your CAO Loss Control and Prevention representative for details.