



RESPIRATOR USE REQUIREMENTS

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Loss Control and Prevention Section

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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 [California Code of Regulations, Title 8, Section 5141. Control of Harmful Exposure to Employees](#)). The purpose of this bulletin is to highlight some of the requirements.

IMPORTANT CAL/OSHA RESPIRATORY PROTECTION REQUIREMENTS*

REQUIREMENTS	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.
Methods for Assessing Employees' Exposures	Air monitoring is used to assess the concentration of air contaminants that your employees may be breathing. Measurements can be made by using instruments that directly measure exposure levels or collect air samples that require lab analysis. Measuring your workers' exposures to respiratory hazards can be complex. It involves knowing how to use and calibrate sampling equipment. It also involves understanding the effects of numerous workplace environmental factors.
Select appropriate respirators	Employer must evaluate respiratory hazards, develop reasonable estimate of airborne contaminant concentrations, and select respirators that provide adequate protection.

REQUIREMENTS	COMMENTS
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 CEO Loss Control and Prevention representative for details.