Disposable Respirators Meeting Kit



What's At Stake

WHAT ARE DISPOSABLE RESPIRATORS?

Filtering facepiece respirators are disposable and come in various styles and designs to protect you from non-hazardous contaminants in the workplace. The filtering material in the disposable respirator can be made of cloth or paper that cleans the air as you breathe it to prevent you from inhaling irritating substances. Some filtering facepiece respirators (dust masks) are used to control nuisance contaminants such as dust, non hazardous fibers, animal dander, and pollen. Other filtering facepiece respirators can have added features for use with infectious diseases, organic vapors, chemical fumes, and nuisance odors.

What's the Danger

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO WEAR DISPOSABLE RESPIRATOR?

When the hazard is related to a respiratory danger, the hazard is not often visible to see and breathing it in may not have any immediate effect – sometimes it even takes years before the consequences are apparent. This can mean people don't recognise the importance of wearing the correct disposable respirator, despite the health impacts being potentially life-changing!

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

RESPIRATORY PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (RPE) – TWO MAIN TYPES

Respirator (filtering device) – uses filters to remove contaminants in the workplace air, there are two main types:

- Non-powered respirators – rely on the wearer's breathing to draw air through the filter
- Powered respirators – use a motor to pass air through the filter to give a supply of clean air to the wearer

Breathing apparatus (BA) – needs a supply of breathing-quality air from an independent source (e.g., air cylinder or air compressor)

PERSON CONDUCTING A BUSINESS OR UNDERTAKING (PCBU) – ROLE

The **person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU)** who directs the carrying out of work must provide you with RPE. A PCBU must ensure that the PPE:

- is suitable for the work (and its hazards), is a suitable size and fit, is reasonably comfortable and compatible with other PPE that needs to be worn.
- is kept clean, hygienic and in good working order.
- is maintained, repaired or replaced so it continues to minimise the risk.

WORKER HANDLING PROTOCOL WITH RPE

Cleaning RPE: The PCBU must provide information, training or instruction to workers about how to correctly clean RPE. Tell the PCBU when you become aware your RPE needs to be cleaned or decontaminated. You should:

- clean RPE after each use (since cleaning RPE can be tricky, your PCBU may arrange for specialist cleaning)
- follow the instructions from your training and the manufacturer's instructions
- use the recommended detergent and disinfectant as some harsher products can cause damage
- rinse RPE well to prevent skin irritation.

Maintaining RPE: The PCBU must provide information, training or instruction to you about how to correctly maintain RPE. Tell the PCBU of any RPE damage or defect that you become aware of. You should:

- inspect your RPE regularly for signs of damage
- check the straps for perishing, breaks, tears and loss of elasticity
- check the inhalation and exhalation valves are working
- replace particulate filters if there is an increase in resistance when breathing, if they are damaged or if they're past their service date
- replace vapour or gas filters when scheduled
- change cartridges immediately when you detect a smell or taste
- for PAPRs and supplied air respirators, check the connections and settings
- check the battery charge and flow-rate for powered devices.

Storing RPE: Your training must cover how to store your RPE. Follow the manufacturer's instructions.

- store your RPE in a clean dry place, away from dust, oil and sunlight – RPE should be stored so that it doesn't get crushed
- keep gas and vapour filters in containers or bags with air tight seals – this is so the moisture in the air does not get adsorbed onto the filter material
- store half-face respirators or full-face respirators fitted with gas cartridges in a sealed container between uses.

Health Monitoring: Health monitoring involves ongoing health checks to see if your work is harming your health.

- An occupational health professional with experience in health monitoring should carry out the health checks.
- Your PCBU should seek your views when selecting the occupational health professional.
- You should receive the results of your health checks.

BEST WORKER CHECKLIST

- The PCBU has provided me with RPE and explained the health risks that it will protect me from.
- I have been facial fit tested for my RPE.
- I have been trained how to use my RPE and store it.
- I understand that I am not to share my RPE with others because the RPE given to me has been fit tested.
- With the PCBU's help, I will complete a regular cleaning, maintenance and storage routine for my RPE.

- I will visually inspect my RPE daily and do the positive and negative pressure tests to ensure there is a complete seal before using it in a hazardous area.
- I have read and understood the manufacturer’s guidelines for my RPE.
- I am aware of the hazards from the substances I am working with. I know what to do in an emergency.
- I know how and when to change both particulate and gas cartridges (if relevant).

FINAL WORD

Selecting the correct respirator for the application is critical when we are faced with many different types of masks. It is important to remember that effective protection is only given when equipment is of the right standard, in good condition and is properly fitted and used. Removal of the RPE, even for short periods, reduces the level of protection afforded to the wearer.