

Respirator Fit, Care and Storage



- When storing your respirator, position it so that the face piece, hoses, and head straps are not bent or stretched out of shape
- Don't fold respirators that aren't designed to be folded
- Cartridges can continue absorbing moisture and contaminants from the surrounding air after you take the respirator off. Store your respirator in a resealable plastic bag before putting it away

Maintenance & Repair

You can do simple maintenance on your respirator, such as replacing valves or clamps yourself. Make sure any replacement parts you use are specifically approved by the manufacturer for the model you are using. Using unapproved parts voids the NIOSH approval for the respirator (this refers to all respirator parts, including straps, cartridges, valves, regulators, hoses, and seals). Employers must provide an adequate supply of respirator parts or extra respirators to ensure that only well-maintained respirators are used. Any nonfunctioning or defective respirators must be tagged as "out of service" and be removed from use until repaired. Also, do not use parts that are not meant for the mask and do not alter any safety equipment.

Emergency Procedure

If your seal is compromised during use (if mask gets bumped hard or if a strap breaks) the following emergency procedure should be taken:

- Evacuate the area
- GO TO WHERE IT IS SAFE
- Once in a safe breathing area, you can look to see what the problem is and fix/replace it

and rubber parts. Commercial respirator cleaning solutions, kits, and related products are available through safety equipment suppliers.

3. Rinse the face piece in clean, warm water to remove any soap residue. (Soap left on the face piece can cause skin rashes and seal the valves shut.)
4. If you're not using an antibacterial soap, soak the face piece in a disinfecting solution for at least two minutes. You can follow the manufacturer's recommendation or you can make your own solution daily. For example, add 30 milliliters (2 tablespoons) of household bleach to 4 litres (one gallon) of water. Remove the face piece and rinse it again with warm water. Wash off all disinfectant as it can cause skin rashes.
5. Dry the face piece on a clean surface or hang it from a line. Make sure that the face piece will not become distorted. If you dry it with a cloth, use a soft, lint-free cloth.
6. Wash valves and any gaskets carefully. Allow them to air dry. Make sure the valves dry *flat*. Replace any curled or damaged valves with new ones.
7. Reassemble the respirator, making sure all pieces, especially the valves and gaskets, are in their correct positions. Reattach the filters or cartridges. Your respirator is now ready for use. Also, if using respirator wipes, you need to clean the inside breathing area first and then wipe down the outside.

Storage

Too often, respirators are left out to get dirty or damaged at the end of the workday. Storing your respirator properly will protect it from chemicals, strong sunlight, and extreme heat or cold. Other correct storage methods include:

- Storing your respirator in a safe place such as a cabinet or locker. Do not store it with your tools—they can damage the respirator

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Fit Testing

To protect you, your respirator must fit properly and form a good seal on your face. A fit test is done to check that contaminated air cannot leak into your respirator and be inhaled. To ensure a good fit, nothing, including eyeglass frames, head coverings or beards, sideburns, or stubble must come between your respirator and your skin where your respirator seals with your face.

When must you do a fit test?

- Before you use your respirator the first time.
- At least once a year.
- If you experience physical changes, such as weight gain (15-20 lbs) or, major dental work such as wisdom teeth removal and first time fitted dentures, that could affect the respirator's fit.

How do you do a fit test?

- Be clean shaven.
- Put on your respirator as you would for your usual work conditions—for example, your straps should be as tight as they usually are when you are working.
- Wear all the other equipment (such as glasses or goggles, hearing protection, and hard hat) you will have to wear when you are wearing your respirator.
- Seal check your respirator, using both a positive or negative pressure check.
- The tester will put a test agent that causes a taste, irritation, or smell into the air around the seal on your respirator (you may have to wear a special hood). Breathe in and report whether you can taste, feel, or smell the test agent. Instead, the tester may use special measuring instruments to determine whether there is any leakage into your mask.

Seal Checks



When you are satisfied that you have found a respirator that fits, there are two simple checks to test the seal. You must do *both* of these checks each time you put on your respirator:

- Negative-pressure seal check
- Positive-pressure seal check

Negative-pressure seal check

1. Put on the respirator and other associated personal protective equipment. Tighten the head straps until the respirator feels snug but comfortable. Wear the respirator for a few minutes so that it will warm up and conform to your face better.
2. Close off the inlet opening of the cartridges or filters by covering them gently with the palms of your hands, a piece of plastic, a special adapter, or gloves. (In some cases, you may have to remove the cartridges so you can cover the inlet valves.) If you are carrying out this test while wearing a PAPR or an air-supplied respirator, close off or disconnect the hose to stop the air flow.
3. Breathe in slightly to create a vacuum.
4. Hold for 10 seconds.
5. If you have a good seal, the face piece should collapse slightly against your face and stay collapsed. No air should leak into the face piece past the sides, top, or bottom.

Positive-pressure seal check

1. Put on the respirator and other associated personal protective equipment. Tighten the head straps until the respirator feels snug but comfortable. Wear the respirator for a few minutes so that it will warm up and conform to your face better.
2. Close off the exhaust valve opening by covering it with the palm of your hand.
3. Breathe out *slightly* to force air into the face piece.
4. Hold for 10 seconds.
5. If you have a good seal, the face piece should bulge out and stay out. No air should leak out of the face piece past the sides, top, or bottom.

Cleaning

Employers are responsible for providing cleaning materials and for giving workers time to clean their respirators properly. The following is an example of a cleaning and sanitizing procedure for half-face piece and full-face piece respirators:

Note: Follow manufactures instruction for cleaning if applicable; only use this method as a reference and/ or if no instructions provided.

1. Remove the filters or cartridges from the respirator face piece. The filters or cartridges must not become wet or damp. Wipe the cartridge exterior with a damp cloth if necessary. Do not clean the cartridge interior. If the filters or cartridges are heavily coated with paint or other material, replace them.
2. Remove the head straps, gaskets, and valves from the face piece. Carefully wash the face piece in warm water. Water that is too hot can warp the face piece. If possible, use a mild soap designed to kill bacteria. Use a soft scrub brush to remove stubborn material. Never use solvents such as turpentine or gasoline to clean the face piece because these liquids can damage plastic