



Understanding the Respiratory Protection Program

The Respiratory Protection Program is designed to help keep you safe from contaminated air. If you work in an environment where you come into contact with chemical fumes, excessive dust, or any other airborne hazards you may be required to wear a respirator. At Ahern, employees working in the Paint Shop must always use a respirator.

Your employer is required by OSHA to perform a hazard assessment to determine when a respirator must be used. If you are required to wear a respirator you must do so.

This training covers the main parts of the Respiratory Protection Program including:

- The medical evaluation
- Fit testing
- Using the respirator
- Caring for your respirator

What is a respirator?

A respirator protects your airways from airborne hazards such as fumes and debris. There are many different kinds of respirators that range from a half mask to a full body suit. Ahern Rentals uses full face masks and half face masks.

The respirator does not provide oxygen. Instead it filters the air before you breathe it.

Why do I need a medical evaluation?

OSHA requires you to complete a questionnaire before you complete the fit test and before you use the respirator. The questionnaire asks about things such as whether you have any heart or breathing problems, whether you have worked with hazardous chemicals before, and how often you expect to use the respirator. The questionnaire is evaluated by a medical doctor. You do not need to be present during the evaluation.

Based on your answers to the questions, the doctor determines if you need an exam. Otherwise, you do not need to see the doctor unless:

- Your supervisor, the medical provider, or Risk Management determines another evaluation is necessary.
- You notice medical symptoms related to using the respirator.
- Changes in the workplace require an additional evaluation.

What is fit testing?

Before you use a respirator you must take a fit test. This test is performed to determine that the respirator fits and works properly, and that you are able to use the respirator without difficulty. During the test you will be using the same make, model, style and size respirator you use in the workplace. Ahern provides a qualified and approved trainer to complete the fit test.

You must be fit tested every year and whenever a different type of respirator will be used in the workplace. After passing the test, you can request an additional fit test if you feel your respirator does not fit properly. You must be fit tested again if your body changes in a way that affects how the respirator fits. This can include weight loss or dental changes. Once you have passed the fit test, you are ready to use your respirator.

Using your Respirator

When using your respirator, make sure nothing interferes with its proper functioning. Even facial hair can affect the way the respirator works. If you are using other types of personal protective equipment, such as safety goggles, along with the respirator, you must make sure they do not affect the way the respirator fits and works.

Before using the respirator you must perform a seal check, which includes a positive and a negative pressure check. This is done to ensure the respirator is sealed properly to your face. If the seal is inadequate, you can inhale hazardous materials from the work environment. A seal check is not the same as the fit test.

You must perform the seal check every time you wear the respirator.

To perform a positive pressure check, cover the exhalation valve with your palm and gently exhale into the face piece. Hold your breath for about 10 seconds. You'll notice the mask bulging out slightly. You should not feel your breath leak outside of the mask seal. This indicates the mask is secure.

To perform a negative pressure check, cover the inhalation valve with your palms and inhale slowly. Hold your breath for about 10 seconds. You'll notice the mask collapse slightly. You should not feel any air come through the mask seal. This indicates the mask is secure.

When using your respirator always follow these guidelines:

- Always wear the respirator in the areas in which it is required.
- Leave the work area immediately if you suspect your respirator is not working.
- Never use a broken respirator.

Inspecting your Respirator

To ensure your safety, always follow these guidelines when inspecting your respirator:

- Make sure it is clean and in good working condition
- Check for any broken or damaged parts
- Inspect the entire respirator including the face piece, head straps, and valves
- Talk to your supervisor immediately if you think your respirator is broken

Remember: You must inspect your respirator before each use.

If your job requires you to wear a respirator, you must do so. When using the respirator follow these guidelines:

- Inspect your respirator before you put it on
- Perform a seal check before each use
- Never use a broken or damaged respirator

If you have any questions about using a respirator, talk to your supervisor or contact Risk Management at (702) 368-6793.

Revision History

Rev.	Date	Change Description & Section	Approver/Contributor/Writer
002	Aug 4, 2008	No text changes made. Reusing topic.	Abby Rotstein
001	Oct 11, 2007	Initial Release.	Rene Casas/Libby Craver/Abby Rotstein