The purpose of a respirator is to prevent the user from inhaling harmful airborne contaminants. Since the contaminants are still present in the air, it is extremely important that:

• the respirator and/or cartridge must be appropriate for protection against the contaminant
• the respirator fits properly
• the respirator is comfortable to wear
• before using the respirator, users must ensure that there is no interference between skin and the respirator. Facial hair, make-up or cream on the skin may interfere with the operation of a respirator.

A respirator fit test is required prior to using any tight-fitting respirator (N95, elastomeric half-face or full face respirators).

Respirators may put stress on the body. If you feel tightness in your chest, dizziness or lightheaded, leave the area and remove the respirator outside of the work area. Inform your supervisor of the episode.

It is YOUR responsibility to ensure that you properly use and maintain the respirator.

When to Re-evaluate Your Respirator

• At least every two years
• Upon changes in workplace conditions that affect respirator use
• If there is a change in your health condition
• If you experience significant discomfort or difficulty during respirator use.
• If there is a change in respirator make or model
• Any change in facial or dental features, or if you gain or lose weight

If any of the above applies, complete the Health Screening Questionnaire (available on the EHS Website) to start the re-evaluation process.
Your respirator should be inspected and the seal checked each time you use it.

INSPECTION

Before each use inspect your respirator as follows:

- Remove respirator from the bag that it has been stored in.
- Ensure valves are there and cartridges and straps are properly connected.
- Ensure the face seal surface is clean and free of any cracks or deterioration.
- Ensure all rubber and elastomeric parts are pliable with no deterioration.
- Check the face shield of the full face respirator to ensure that it is clean.
- Ensure single use (e.g. N95) respirators are clean and in proper shape. Dispose of single use respirators when contaminated or damaged.
- Ensure respirator cartridge is replaced as per the cartridge change schedule.

Respirators that have failed inspection must be taken out of service. Repairs are only to made by trained personnel.

Respirators which are not used daily should be inspected at least once a month.

SEAL CHECK

Perform a seal check each time you use a respirator or feel the seal of the respirator has been affected during use.

The first step is to ensure the respirator fits properly and is securely in place.

Regardless of the method used, if ANY air leaks are detected, the respirator needs to be adjusted.

N95 (filtering facepiece) Respirator

No valve:
- Place the palms of both hands over the cup of the respirator so it is completely covered and exhale sharply.
- If you feel air blowing out on to your face and/or eyes, re-adjust the respirator

With valve:
- Place the palms of both hands over the cup of the respirator so it is completely covered and inhale sharply. The respirator should collapse slightly. If not, re-adjust the respirator.

Positive Seal Check
- Cover the exhalation valve or breathing tube so that no air flows out. Exhale gently and feel for a slight positive pressure inside the facepiece. There should be no outward leakage of air.

CLEANING AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Cleaning: Clean the respirator after each use and sanitize it if used by more than one worker. Follow manufacturer’s recommendations for cleaning and sanitization. Filtering facepiece (N95) respirators cannot be cleaned, and need to be disposed of when they are contaminated or damaged.

Storage: Store respirator and cartridges in a sealed bag away from the source of contamination, direct sunlight, extreme moisture and extreme temperatures.

Considerations: Follow manufacturer’s recommendations for types of cartridges and replacement dates. A change schedule for cartridges/canisters must be in place.

If it is difficult to communicate while wearing a respirator, do not remove the respirator to communicate. Prior to starting work, agree on a communication system (i.e sign language or written notes).