

TOOLBOX TALK: RESPIRATORY PROTECTION

Job or site _____

Date _____

Led by _____

Open with this

Everybody wearing a respirator today, put it on now and do a seal check in front of me. If you have never been shown how, say so, because that is the point of this.

The talk

A tight fitting respirator works by sealing to skin. Everything else about it, the cartridges, the rating, the price, is downstream of that one seal.

Which is why facial hair between the sealing surface and the face is not allowed. Not trimmed short, not most of the way. If the hair crosses the seal, that respirator does not work and the standard says it is not to be worn.

You do a user seal check every single time you put it on. Cover the cartridges and breathe in, the facepiece should pull in and hold. Cover the exhale valve and breathe out gently, it should push out slightly without leaking round the edge.

A seal check is not a fit test. A fit test is done in advance, with equipment, to prove that this size and model fits this face, and it is what tells you which respirator to be issued in the first place.

Before any of that, there is a medical evaluation. Wearing a respirator is work for your heart and lungs, and the evaluation happens before you are fit tested or put to work in one. It is provided at no cost to you, and so is the respirator and the training.

Last thing, and it is the one that catches people. A paper dust mask is not a respirator for vapors, fumes or gases. It filters particles. Solvent, paint, adhesive and exhaust go straight through it, and the smell you notice after twenty minutes is the proof.

Point at these before anybody starts

- The respirator you have, and the rating printed on it.
- The cartridges, and the date somebody wrote on them.
- The straps, and whether the rubber has gone stiff or shiny.
- The exhale valve, and whether it is clean and sitting flat.

- Where it gets stored between shifts, and whether that is a bag or a dusty gang box.
- The job today that produces vapor rather than dust, and who is on it.

The rules that apply

- Employees with facial hair that crosses the sealing surface, or any condition that interferes with the seal or valve function, are not permitted to wear a tight fitting respirator.
- A user seal check is done every time a tight fitting respirator is put on, using the manufacturer procedure or the one in the standard.
- Glasses, goggles and other PPE must be worn so they do not interfere with the face to facepiece seal.
- A medical evaluation is provided before an employee is fit tested or required to use a respirator at work.
- Tight fitting respirators are fit tested, qualitatively or quantitatively, before use.
- Respirators, training and medical evaluations are provided at no cost to the employee.

Ask the crew

- Show me a negative pressure seal check right now.
- What is the difference between a fit test and a seal check?
- Which job on this site needs a cartridge rather than a dust mask?

Close with this

If it leaks, you are not protected, and you will not feel the leak. That is the whole reason for the check.

Attendance

Everybody who was present signs, including subcontractors and anybody visiting the site.

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This talk is general safety information for a crew briefing, not legal advice and not a substitute for the training your employees are required to have. Standards are quoted for orientation only. Check the current text of the standard and your own state plan, which may be stricter than the federal rule.