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Protect Yourself Respirators

Respiratory protection must be worn whenever you are working in a hazardous atmosphere. The appropriate respirator will depend on the contaminant(s) to which you are exposed and the protection factor (PF) required. Required respirators must be NIOSH-approved and medical evaluation and training must be provided before use.

Single-strap dust masks are usually not NIOSH-approved. They must not be used to protect from hazardous atmospheres. However, they may be useful in providing comfort from pollen or other allergens.



Approved filtering facepieces (dust masks) can be used for dust, mists, welding fumes, etc. They do not provide protection from gases or vapors. **DO NOT USE FOR ASBESTOS OR LEAD**; instead, select from the respirators below.



Half-face respirators can be used for protection against most vapors, acid gases, dust or welding fumes. Cartridges/filters must match contaminant(s) and be changed periodically.



Full-face respirators are more protective than half-face respirators. They can also be used for protection against most vapors, acid gases, dust or welding fumes. The face-shield protects face and eyes from irritants and contaminants. Cartridges/filters must match contaminant(s) and be changed periodically.



Loose-fitting powered-air-purifying respirators (PAPR) offer breathing comfort from a battery-powered fan which pulls air through filters and circulates air throughout helmet/hood. They can be worn by most workers who have beards. Cartridges/filters must match contaminant(s) and be changed periodically.



A Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) is used for entry and escape from atmospheres that are considered immediately dangerous to life and health (IDLH) or oxygen deficient. They use their own air tank.



For more complete information: