

Selecting a respirator

Workplace conditions such as temperature, humidity and work rate affect wearer comfort and the relevance of the different respirator features that are available. A respirator must allow you the freedom to communicate easily with colleagues and fit well with the rest of your safety equipment.

Achieving a good fit is essential to the level of protection. A leaking respirator could be perceived as comfortable, but is not much better than using no respirator at all.

Always select a respirator that meets the European Standard, is CE Marked and offers you the right level of comfort and protection...and ensure that you fit it correctly.

Nuisance dust masks

Many types of masks and respirators seem similar but there are significant differences in the use of materials, design technology and protection levels. Make sure you always use an approved respirator to protect your health.

Nuisance Dust Masks vs. Disposable Respirators

Disposable Respirators are typically white face masks with two straps and often an exhalation valve for improved comfort. They are also printed with 'EN149:2001', the 'CE' mark and they are designed to provide effective protection against fine respirable dusts, mists and metal fumes.

Nuisance Dust Masks and Gauze Pads do NOT meet the European Standard (EN149:2001) for respirators and are not CE marked so they don't have any of this information printed on the mask. They do not provide protection against fine lung damaging dusts and cannot be used as personal protective equipment.

Assigned Protection Factors:

The higher the factor the greater the protection

Fit testing

Checking that a respirator with a tight fitting facepiece provides an adequate seal to the wearer's face has long been considered best practice as part of a general Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) programme.

Fit testing has been a mandatory requirement under the UK Asbestos Regulations and now, with the introduction of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) and the supporting Approved Codes of Practice, fit testing is an industry wide requirement. Respirators with tight fitting facepieces include disposable respirators, half masks and full face masks.

Fit testing should be carried out:

- On all wearers of RPE with tight fitting facepieces where fit testing has previously not been performed
 - During initial selection of RPE

Fit testing should be repeated at appropriate times such as:

- If the RPE wearer significantly loses or gains weight, has major dental work or sustains a major facial injury
 - If a different size or model of RPE is specified
- If specified by the company policy eg. repeated with annual health surveillance check.

Fit testing is in addition to the requirement to perform a pre-use fit check.

Two main methods of fit testing are available:

Qualitative fit testing

Qualitative fit tests provide a pass or fail result based upon the wearer detecting a test agent. They provide a subjective measure of the quality of the seal of the facepiece to the wearer's face. These tests may be carried out by a suitably trained company Safety Advisor.

Quantitative fit testing

Quantitative fit tests give an objective measure of the quality of the seal between the wearer's face and the facepiece. A fit factor number is produced. These tests will usually be carried out by a consultant.

For more information or advice contact your safety advisor.

Mask and Respirator Selection Guide



APPLICATION	FACE MASKS			FILTERS		APPLICATION	FACE MASKS			FILTERS	
CONSTRUCTION	FFP1	FFP2	FFP3	A1	P2	WELDING	FFP1	FFP2	FFP3	A1	P2
Demolition		●	●		●	Stainless Steel			●	●	
Groundwork		●	●		●	MIG/TIG			●	●	
Low Level Asbestos			●		●	Spot Welding			●	●	
Scabbling	●	●	●		●	Brazing/Silver Solder			●	●	
Shot Creting	●	●	●		●	Galvanized Welding*			●	●	
METAL WORKING	FFP1	FFP2	FFP3	A1	P2	TRADES/DIY	FFP1	FFP2	FFP3	A1	P2
Molten Metal Handling			●	●		Rust		●	●		●
Maching		●	●	●		Filler Dust		●	●		●
Grinding	●	●	●		●	Concrete & Plaster		●	●		●
Polishing	●	●	●		●	Wood (Soft & Hard)		●	●		●
Linishing	●	●	●		●	Plastic Dust	●	●	●		●
						Paint Dust**		●	●		●
						Boiler Maintenance		●	●		●
						*Not in confined spaces		**Not Isocyanates			

Selection guide for gas/vapour/hazardous particulates

Gas Filters	Hazard Type	Examples	Maximum Use Level	Colour
A1	Organic Vapour	Solvents such as White Spirit Toluene, Carbon Tetrachloride (CCl4)	1000 ppm or 10 x OEL whichever is lower	Brown
B1	Inorganic Gases	Chlorine (Cl2), Hydrogen Sulphide (H2S)	1000 ppm or 10 x OEL whichever is lower	Grey
E1	Acid Gases	Sulphur Dioxide (SO2)	1000 ppm or 10 x OEL whichever is lower	Yellow
K1	Ammonia	Ammonia (NH3) and certain Amines	1000 ppm or 10 x OEL whichever is lower	Green
ABEK1	OV/IG/AG/AM	Combine Filter ABEK1	1000 ppm or 10 x OEL whichever is lower	Striped
P1	Particulate	Fine Toxic Dust	4 x OEL	White
P2	Particulate	Fine Toxic Dust, Water and Oil based Mists/Aerosols	10 x OEL	White
P3	Particulate	Fine Toxic Dust, Fumes, Water and Oil based Mists/Aerosols	30 x OEL	White

SHELF LIFE: 5 years from the date of manufacture (if stored between -5 °C and +50 °C and humidity not over 80%).