

TOOLBOX TALKS

Respiratory Protection

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TOPIC: Respiratory Protection

General Information

Respirators come in many different forms, shapes and sizes.

- Before you wear a respirator, you must make certain it fits your face properly and provides a good seal. This process is called “respirator fit testing.”

There are different respirators for different types of hazards.

- For example, hazards such as silica dust or asbestos fibers require particulate respirators; whereas hazards such as gasoline vapors and sewer gas (hydrogen sulfide) require respirators that have special cartridges to filter (adsorb) the gas of concern.

Different types of respirators offer different levels of protection.

- The nature of the hazard determines the respirator that should be used.
- For example, if the hazard of concern is present in concentrations that are 50 times greater than what is known to be safe, a full-faced respirator would be warranted. If the hazard is present in concentrations that are 2 times greater than what is known to be safe, a half-faced respirator would be warranted.

Things to Know Before You Use a Respirator

- What hazard or hazards are present?
- How much of the agent of concern is present (this determines the type of respirator that should be worn – e.g. half-faced, full-faced, SCBA)?
- Is the cartridge in the respirator good? Cartridges are used to filter agents of concern and have can only be used a limited number of times. Change cartridges according to manufacturers’ specifications.
- Does your respirator fit you properly? Check respirator fit every time you put it on and get a professional fit test at least once per year.
- Wearing a respirator may protect you from harmful agents, but respirators also burden one’s breathing. A medical professional should determine if you are medically qualified to wear a respirator.

Questions to Generate Discussion

- What hazard(s) exist in your workplace that might require you to wear a respirator?
- What should you do if you think there is a hazard present that might require respiratory protection?

Discussion Date: _____

Employee Participants:

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