



## TOOLBOX TALK: VOLUNTARY RESPIRATORY PROTECTION

### Mandatory Information for Employees Using Respirators When Not Required Under the Standard

All respirators used shall be certified by the National Institute of Occupational Safety (NIOSH), and respirators shall be used for protection against only those air contaminants for which they are approved. All affected employees are to be trained before using a respirator in the workplace.

#### APPENDIX D TO 29 CFR 1910.134:

Respirators are an effective method of protection against designated hazards when properly selected and worn. Respirator use is encouraged, even when exposures are below the exposure limit, to provide an additional level of comfort and protection for workers. However, if a respirator is used improperly or not kept clean, the respirator itself can become a hazard to the worker. Sometimes, workers may wear respirators to avoid exposures to hazards, even if the amount of hazardous substance does not exceed the limits set by OSHA standards. If your employer provides respirators for your voluntary use, or if you provide your own respirator, you need to take certain precautions to be sure that the respirator itself does not present a hazard.

You should do the following:

1. Read and heed all instructions provided by the manufacturer on use, maintenance, cleaning and care, and warnings regarding the respirators limitations.
2. Choose respirators certified for use to protect against the contaminant of concern. NIOSH, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, certifies respirators. A label or statement of certification should appear on the respirator or respirator packaging. It will tell you what the respirator is designed for and how much it will protect you.
3. Do not wear your respirator into atmospheres containing contaminants for which your respirator is not designed to protect against. For example, a respirator designed to filter dust particles will not protect you against gases, vapors, or very small solid particles of fumes or smoke.
4. Keep track of your respirator so that you do not mistakenly use someone else's respirator.

#### **Important Note:**

If an employee chooses to wear a filtering facepiece voluntarily, a medical evaluation is not required. However, if an employee chooses to wear any other type of respirator voluntarily, a medical evaluation is required. The employer shall identify a physician or other licensed healthcare professional (PLHCP) to perform medical evaluations using the medical questionnaire in Appendix C of 29 CFR 1910.134 OR an initial medical examination that obtains the same information as the questionnaire.

