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Wearing Protection?



Are you still wearing [dusk masks](#) instead of [particulate respirators](#), as a way of filtering the air you breathe at the jobsite? Does it really protect your lungs? The body's natural defenses attempt to filter contaminated air. How? On the front lines, there are your nose hairs. Gross, right? But these hairs help prevent foreign particles from trespassing into your lungs. Particles that get past the nose hairs are expelled through coughing, an involuntary reaction to stuff entering the airways. But why test your defenses when you can protect your airways? At a jobsite, the air might be full of dust and other things.



Dusk masks create a false sense of security. What does a dusk mask actually do for respiratory protection? Not much. Particulate respirators provide a better level of filtration and if they are worn properly reduces the flow of airborne dust and particles, which may otherwise flow right into your lungs. Particulate respirators with a high level of filtration are ideal. Look for ones approved by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

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There are nine (9) classes of particulate respirators NIOSH approves. There are three (3) series of filters: The N series, the R series and the P series. There are three (3) levels of filter efficiency: 95%, 99% and 99.97%. The N series filters are usually used for solid or liquid particles that do not contain oil (such as wood dust), these are the ones most commonly worn at a job site during installation and sanding. The P-series filters are required if working with oil aerosols. Filter efficiency indicates how efficiently the filters remove those miniscule, airborne particles not visible to the eye, according to the NIOSH test criteria. N95 particulate respirators were tested to filter out at least 95 percent of particles.



Finishers must wear a particulate respirator, which filters out gases, vapors and fumes that molten metals typically create during [welding](#) and [smelting](#) tasks. Notably, fumes are particles too, as gases and vapors are invisible contaminants; mixed within the air, such as solvent vapor, evaporating off of a finish. Don't think some finishes are safe. They're not. Shouldn't be surprising! Review the [MSDS](#) to determine which type of particulate respirator is recommended for the job. Consider particulate respirators with activated charcoal cartridges. There's actually two types: half and full facepieces. Half facepieces are fine unless your working with [conversion varnishes](#). Remember, the charcoal cartridge is activated as you open the sealed package. So don't leave it out in the open. Place it in a clean bag, preferably one that is resealable. Clean it thoroughly. Follow the manufacturer's suggestions. Contact the manufacturer directly, should you require support.

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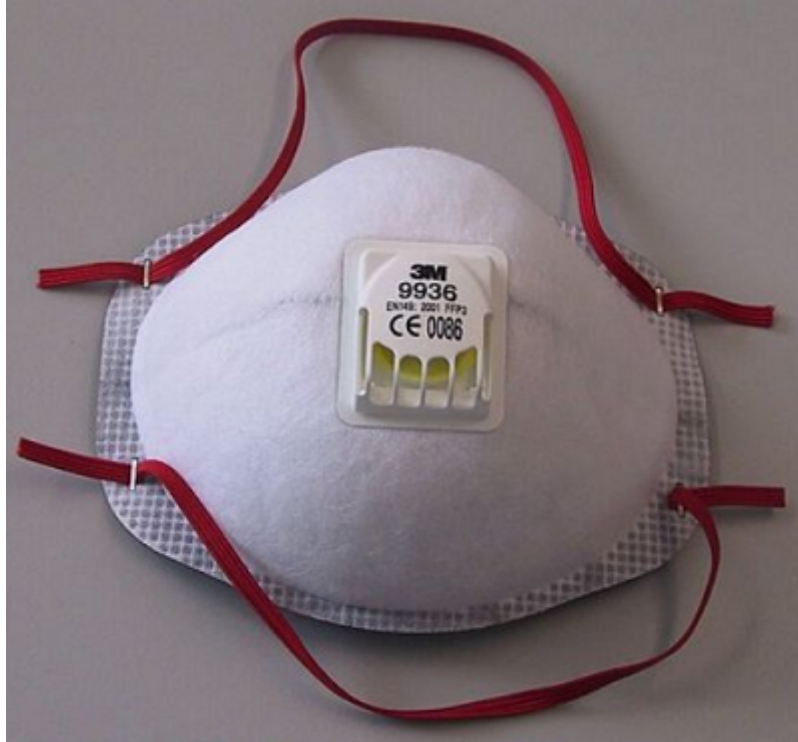
Got a beard, mustache or goatee? It gets in the way of a good fit and interferes with the seal of the particulate respirator. Avoid using vasoline or lotion to improve the seal. It defeats the purpose of the particulate respirator and is prohibited under [OSHA](#) regulations. Follow fitting and use instructions. Use both hands to form the little metal band; so it fits snugly and evenly around the bridge of your nose. Follow the instructions for a [user seal check](#) each and every time you wear it. Check the fit. Get a good seal. Every particulate respirator must be properly fit-tested to determine whether it fits. Following the instructions during each use aids in achieving the maximum reduction in exposure.



If your particulate respirator is damaged, it must be replaced. How can you tell? If it is soiled or takes an effort to breathe. R series and P series have duration requirements at jobsites with oil contaminants. In the past, the rules required workers to replace their charcoal cartridges when wearers smelled or tasted the vapor or the gas. Not anymore. Nope. But why? As it turns out, some wearers are more sensitive to smell than others. Non smokers likely have a keener sense of smell. Moving forward, schedules must be set; based on typical use. The schedule dictates when all cartridges must be replaced.

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Comfort is an important feature. Don't overlook it and keep it on your face while working. Some have an exhalation valve. The hot air you breathe out exits through the valve, which may minimize hot steamy air against your face and minimizes fogging of eyewear and eye-protection wear. These regulations should keep workers safe and comfortable at the jobsite.



[OSHA](#) regulates workplace safety and has provisions on particulate respirator use. Employers are required to have a written respiratory protection program in place and perform training, fit-testing and medical evaluations before workers can use particulate respirators. Compliance failure could result in citations and fines, which are issued to the contractor. Exceptions exist for disposable particulate respirators under voluntary use situations if no particulate hazard is in the air. It's obviously important to ensure that there's clean air to breathe in the workplace. It's a basic and essential requirement.

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From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia



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