

Respirators: readiness before the dusty task

Talk 20 of 52 | Week 20 | Health

Leader: adapt this talk to today's electrical work and site procedures. See the educational-use and liability notice on page 2.

START THE CONVERSATION

A crew is preparing to drill concrete indoors. Someone offers spare masks from a toolbox. Before accepting them, confirm the controls and respiratory protection required for the actual exposure.

KEY TALKING POINTS

1. Respiratory protection is part of a planned program when required. The employer must select suitable equipment for the hazard and provide the applicable medical evaluation, fit testing, training, and other program elements. A talk or attendance signature does not complete those requirements.
2. Engineering and work-practice controls remain important. Do not replace a required dust-extraction or other control method with a randomly chosen respirator. If the planned control is unavailable, stop and ask the responsible person how the task will be managed.
3. Electrical job example: the crew moves from a few outdoor anchor holes to repeated drilling in an enclosed room. Ask whether the existing assessment and controls cover the changed work. A different setting or duration can require a fresh review before proceeding.
4. Use only the equipment assigned under the program and follow its limitations, inspection, fit, and maintenance instructions. Report damage, poor fit, or interference from other equipment. Do not make unauthorized modifications to improve comfort or visibility.
5. Discuss storage and replacement arrangements before the task. Respiratory equipment kept loose with sharp fittings or contaminated debris may not be ready for use. Identify where clean equipment is available and who approves replacement components or a different model.
6. Ask what a worker should do if breathing becomes difficult or the equipment appears to fail. Follow the program's safe exit and reporting procedure; do not remain in the exposure area troubleshooting the problem. Confirm how the crew will communicate during the task.
7. Finish by checking readiness with the program administrator or supervisor. The crew should know which task is covered, what equipment is required, and what changes trigger review. Do not improvise entry into an unknown atmosphere using a dust mask or air-purifying respirator.

ASK THE CREW

1. Does our approved setup cover today's actual task?
2. Who handles a fit or equipment problem?

BEFORE WORK STARTS

Confirm required program steps and assigned equipment before work that requires respiratory protection.

OSHA SOURCES / FURTHER READING

OSHA: Respiratory protection program requirements

Attendance & action record

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Date: _____ Leader: _____

Company / jobsite: _____

Site hazards and controls discussed:

Follow-up action / responsible person / due date:

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Participant name	Signature / acknowledgment

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