

MBAA Safety Tool Box Talk



It's a Dust Mask...no, It's a Respirator...

There is a widespread misunderstanding of what constitutes a dust mask rather than a particulate respirator.

Respirators fall into many categories:

- Particulate Respirators
- Chemical Cartridge/Gas Mask Respirator:
- Powered Air-Purifying Respirator (PAPR):
- Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA)

In this Tool Box Talk we will focus only on **Particulate Respirators** and “dust masks”.

DUST MASK VS. RESPIRATORS, CAN YOU TELL THE DIFFERENCE?

Dust masks are not NIOSH* approved disposable filtering face pieces. They can be worn for comfort against non-toxic nuisance dusts during activities like mowing, gardening, sweeping and dusting. These masks are not respirators and do not offer protection against hazardous dusts, gases or vapors.

Dust masks can be mistaken for NIOSH* approved N-95 respirators. How can you tell the difference? Look for a NIOSH label printed on the box and/or mask. Also the use of the word “respirator” on the box may indicate it's a NIOSH approved respirator.



One strap and no NIOSH label = Dust Mask

Dust “nuisance” mask



Two straps and NIOSH label = Respirator

Typical N-95 Respirator

***NIOSH**- 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.

SO WHAT DOES OSHA HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THIS?

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.

5. Read the following: [Appendix D to Sec. 1910.134 \(Mandatory\) Information for Employees Using Respirators When Not Required Under the Standard](#)

[63 FR 1152, Jan. 8, 1998; 63 FR 20098, April 23, 1998]

If you are required to wear a respirator in your job to protect against hazards, you will have to go through **Respiratory Fit Testing and Certification**.

If you have any questions regarding this, please see your supervisor or manager or a member of the Safety Committee.

LINKS

- https://www.osha.gov/dts/shib/respiratory_protection.pdf
- https://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=INTERPRETATIONS&p_id=28565
- http://www.ehs.msu.edu/occupational/programs_guidelines/respiratory_program/dust_mask_information.pdf

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON BREWERY SAFETY PROGRAMS, PLEASE VISIT THE MBAA SAFETY WEBSITE AT
www.mbaa.com/brewresources