

RESPIRATORY PROTECTION PROGRAM

Respirators prevent the entry of harmful substances into the lungs while breathing. If respirators are worn in the workplace as added employee protection or as a means to control exposure to air contaminants below the permissible exposure level, an on-going respirator program must be in place. It will be necessary to:

- develop a written respiratory protection program with procedures that are specific to the worksite;
- implement the program and update it as necessary
- assign a qualified program administrator to run and evaluate the program

The Written Respiratory Protection Program must include the following elements (as applicable):

- Procedures for
 - Selecting appropriate respirators for use in the workplace
 - Fit testing tight-fitting respirators
 - Using respirators properly in routine situations as well as in reasonably foreseeable emergencies
 - Cleaning, disinfecting, storing, inspecting, repairing, removing from service or discarding, and otherwise maintaining respirators. Also, you must establish schedules for these elements.
 - Ensuring adequate air supply, quantity, and flow of breathing air for atmosphere-supplying respirators
 - Regularly evaluating the effectiveness of the program
- Provisions for medical evaluation of employees who must use respirators
- Training employees in the proper use of respirators (including putting them on and removing them), the limitations on their use, and their maintenance

If dust masks are the only respirators that are being worn voluntarily, then it is not necessary to have a written respiratory protection program. The respirator user must be given the information provided in Appendix D of the standard, "Information for Employees Using Respirators When Not Required Under the Standard."

OSHA Web-Site Assistance: There are many tools and publications available for you to download off of the Internet on this subject:

- www.osha.gov/Publications/secgrev-current.pdf provides a 149-page booklet entitled "Small Entity Compliance Guide for the Revised Respiratory Protection Standard" which is recommended for all. Much information, as well as checklists, are provided which should help in developing or strengthening your respiratory protection program.
- www.osha.gov/SLTC/respiratory_advisor/mainpage.html provides the "Respiratory Protection Advisor" which OSHA has prepared in order to help you comply with the standard.
- www.osha.gov/SLTC/respiratoryprotection/index.html provides technical links to ALL

OSHA sites which may be of use to you in developing and strengthening your respiratory protection program. At the time of this writing, it was last updated on March 18, 2002.

Composites One can provide NIOSH approved respirators, dust masks and replacement canisters and cartridges. Call 800/348-7503 for the Composites One Accessories & Equipment Catalog.