

As a fitter, plumber, fab shop worker, or service tech, you may be exposed to potential respiratory hazards. You can protect yourself by following your company's respiratory protection program.

Potential Respiratory Hazards Common to Mechanical Work

If one or more hazards are present, and your work area lacks adequate ventilation or sufficient oxygen, you'll need respiratory protection. The most common hazards include:

- Hot work fumes that emit heavy metals
- Minerals in dust form
- Chemicals used in work areas
- Living organisms when airborne

When the oxygen content in your breathing-air is sufficient, and the air can be effectively purified for safe breathing, you'll be able to use an air-purifying respirator.

Responsibilities

After completing a medical evaluation, you will be expected to:

- Participate actively in the fit testing process
- Request a new respirator if a change in your physical condition affects the fit
- Wear the proper respirator whenever and wherever necessary
- Use the appropriate filtering media for the specific hazard
- Properly use, clean, store, and maintain your respirator

Proper Use

Refer to your company's respiratory protection program for details on proper use.

- Wear your respirator as you were trained
- Properly maintain, clean, sanitize, and store your respirator
- Perform negative and positive seal checks each time you use your respirator

Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Storage

Clean and sanitize your respirator regularly at the dedicated cleaning area.

- Disassemble and wash all non-filtering media with mild detergent and water
- Use the specialty wipes to wipe down respirator parts and allow to dry
- Place in a dry, resealable plastic respirator storage bag, and store in a cool, dry area

Maintenance

Perform frequent inspections, and inform your supervisor immediately if any parts are defective.

- Face piece: cracks, tears, holes, distortion, and cracked or loose lenses
- Head strap: breaks, tears, and broken buckles
- Valves: dirt, residue, cracks, and tears
- Filtering media: defective filter, cartridge, or canister

Change Schedules

Replace the filter or cartridge when:

- You experience difficulty in breathing
- You smell or taste a chemical substance
- The parts become wet
- The manufacturer's change schedules recommend it

Additional Precautions

- Facial hair, scars, or jewelry can affect the seal; make sure nothing is preventing a tight seal with your respirator
- If your work space lacks adequate oxygen to safely support life, you will need to use supplied-atmosphere or self-contained respiratory protection