

## RESPIRATORS

### How to Properly Use and Maintain Your Respirator

Your respirator is one of the most important components of your Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Spraysuits, gloves, and other safety apparel helps prevent access of chemical vapours and liquids from coming into contact with your skin. Your respirator is designed to help reduce the chances of inhalation of chemical vapours.

Buying a good respirator is just the beginning. You must be responsible to maintain your respirator, clean it, check it and replace parts that are beginning to wear out. The following has been taken from the BC Government website on PPE. These points are the same regardless of whether you have a half-face mask or a full-face mask.

#### Cartridges:

- Make sure you have the correct replaceable respirator cartridge for the chemicals you are handling and applying. For most products, you should have a cartridge approved for use with pesticides or organic vapours.
- Both filters and cartridges must be replaced regularly for the respirator to work.
- Typically, you can expect about four hours of life from the pre-filters and eight hours from the cartridges.
- If you ever notice that breathing becomes more difficult or that you can smell the pesticide, replace the pre-filter and cartridges immediately. Replace cartridges at least once a year, and more often if you use them frequently.
- Replace cartridges which are more than one year old if they have been removed from their sealed bag.
- Replace all canisters on gas masks when they have exceeded the expiry date.

#### Fit Test:

Before every use, perform a Fit Test on your respirator:

- Check for air leaks around the respirator mask. Replace and adjust any headbands that are worn out.
- Facial hair prevents a good seal between the respirator and your face. Make sure to shave prior to applying chemicals.
- **Inhalation Fit Test:** Place the palm of the hand over the cartridge inhalation points and breathe in. If you cannot feel air enter the mask and the face plate collapses slightly, there is a proper fit and the exhalation valve is functioning correctly.
- **Exhalation test:** Completely cover the exhalation valve with the palm of your hand. Breathe out enough to cause slight pressure inside the face plate. If no air escapes from around the face plate, it is fitted properly and the inhalation valve is functioning correctly. If air escapes, adjust the straps and mask for a better fit and try again.

#### Cleaning Your Respirator:

- Clean your respirator after each time you use it. Remember to use gloves while cleaning it!
- Wash the respirator in warm water with a mild detergent or in a cleaner specified by the manufacturer.
- Rinse thoroughly and drain to dry. Dry the face plate with a clean dry cloth.
- Put the respirator back together following the manufacturer's directions.
- Store the respirator in a cool, clean, dry place. Store it in a plastic bag to extend the life of the cartridge.

Reference: (<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/animals-and-crops/plant-health/pesticides-agriculture/pesticide-safety/personal-protective-equipment>)