



Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE)

Many workers wear respirators or breathing apparatus (RPE) to protect their health in the workplace. There are a few different types of RPE and it should all be adequate and suitable. Adequate means it should be right for the hazard and it should reduce exposure to the level required to protect the wearer's health. Suitable means it is right for the wearer, task and environment, such that the wearer can work freely and without additional risks due to the RPE.

There are 2 main types of RPE, these are respirators and breathing apparatus. Respirators are filtering devices, they use filters to remove contaminants from the air being breathed in. They can be either non-powered, relying on the wearer's breathing to draw air through the filter or they can be powered, using a motor to pass air through the filter. Breathing apparatus needs a supply of breathing-quality air from an independent source e.g. air cylinder or an air compressor.

There are 2 main styles that the RPE comes in, tight-fitting facepieces (masks) and loose-fitting facepieces. Tight-fitting facepieces rely on having a good seal with the wearers face. A face fit test should be carried out to ensure the RPE can protect the wearer. Loose-fitting facepieces rely on enough clean air being provided to the wearer to prevent contaminant leaking in (only available as powered respirators or BA). Examples are hoods, helmets, visors, blouses and suits.

If you are using RPE with tight-fitting facepieces you should make sure each wearer has a fit test. You can use the fit test as a training opportunity, as it allows you to highlight to the wearer the consequences of poor fit and improper use on the effectiveness of the RPE device. It is also good practice to have a system to ensure repeat fit testing is carried out on a regular basis. This is especially important when RPE is used frequently as a primary means of exposure control, e.g. annual testing for workers involved in licensed asbestos removal. If there are any changes to a person's face through, for example, weight loss/gain, scars etc, a repeat fit test will be necessary.

RPE fit testing should be conducted by a competent person - you should take steps to ensure that person who carries out the fit test is appropriately trained, qualified and experienced, and is provided with appropriate information to undertake each particular task.

For more information click [here](#)

We are always looking to assist businesses with their Health & Safety, if you know of anyone who would benefit from our services please do let us know. Many thanks.