

WAC 296-307-59805 Make sure voluntary use of respirators is safe.

Definition:

Voluntary use. Respirator use that is requested by the employee AND permitted by the employer when **no** respiratory hazard exists.

IMPORTANT:

If the employer chooses to require respirator use, use is **NOT** voluntary and the required use sections of this part apply.

(1) The employer must make sure voluntary respirator use does **NOT**:

(a) Interfere with an employee's ability to work safely, such as restricting necessary vision or radio communication;

OR

(b) Create health hazards.

Notes:

Examples of health hazards include:

1. Skin irritation, dermatitis, or other health effects caused by using a dirty respirator;
2. Illness created by sharing contaminated respirators;
3. Health effects caused by use of an unsafe air supply, such as carbon monoxide poisoning.

(2) The employer must provide all voluntary respirator users with the advisory information in Table 2 at no cost to them.

Note:

If employees are provided the advisory information required in the previous section, WAC 296-307-598, the employer does not need to provide the additional information in Table 2 to those employees.

(3) The employer must develop and maintain a written program that includes the following:

(a) Medical evaluation provisions as specified in WAC 296-307-604.

(b) Procedures to properly clean and disinfect respirators, according to WAC 296-307-62015, if they are reused.

(c) How to properly store respirators, according to WAC 296-307-61010, so that using them does not create hazards.

(d) Procedures to make sure there is a safe air supply, according to WAC 296-307-616, when using air-line respirators and SCBAs.

(e) Training according to WAC 296-307-608 when necessary to ensure respirator use does **NOT** create a hazard.

Notes:

1. Pay for medical evaluations, training, travel related costs, and wages. The employer does **NOT** need to pay for respirators employees use only voluntarily.
2. If the employer has both voluntary and required respirator users, the employer may choose to treat voluntary users as required users. Doing this exceeds the requirements in this section.

Exemption:

If employees use only filtering-facepiece respirators and do so only voluntarily, the employer does not need to develop and maintain a written program.

Use Table 2 to provide information to employees who voluntarily use any type of respirator.

Table 2

Advisory Information for Employees Who Voluntarily Use Respirators

- Respirators protect against airborne hazards when properly selected and used. WISHA recommends voluntary use of respirators when exposure to substances is below WISHA permissible exposure limits (PELs) because respirators can provide employees an additional level of comfort and protection.
- If the employee chooses to voluntarily use a respirator (whether it is provided by the employee or by the employer) be aware that **respirators can create hazards for the user**. Employees can avoid these hazards if they know how to use the respirator properly AND how to keep it clean. Take these steps:
 - Read and follow all instructions provided by the manufacturer about use, maintenance (cleaning and care), and warnings regarding the respirator's limitations.
 - Choose respirators that have been certified for use to protect against the substance of concern. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) certifies respirators. If a respirator is not certified by NIOSH, employees have no guarantee that it meets minimum design and performance standards for workplace use.
 - A NIOSH approval label will appear on or in the respirator packaging. It will tell the employee and employer what protection the respirator provides.
 - The employee should keep track of respirator so the employee does not mistakenly use someone else's.

Advisory Information for Employees Who Voluntarily Use Respirators

– **DO NOT** wear the respirator into:

- Atmospheres containing hazards that the respirator is not designed to protect against.

For example, a respirator designed to filter dust particles will not protect against solvent vapor, smoke or oxygen deficiency.

- Situations where respirator use is required.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 49.17.010, 49.17.040, 49.17.050, and 49.17.060. WSR 20-21-091, § 296-307-59805, filed 10/20/20, effective 11/20/20; WSR 05-01-166, § 296-307-59805, filed 12/21/04, effective 4/2/05.]