

## i FACT SHEET

# Agriculture Respiratory Protection

437-004-1041 • Division 4/I



Many agriculture activities create respiratory health hazards to workers. Some examples of air contaminant hazards could include pesticide dusts, mists, or vapors; dusty fields; exposure to moldy hay, straw, and grain; dangerous hydrogen sulfide accumulations in manure pits and sump pumps; nitrogen dioxide in conventional silos; and many others.

## Required Respirator Use

The Oregon OSHA agriculture Respiratory Protection Standard, 437-004-1041, establishes employer requirements to protect workers.

Respirators are required when workers are exposed to hazardous air contaminants over the Permissible Exposure Limits (PEL), when a pesticide label requires their use, or if the employer requires the use for any reason.

When there is required respirator use, employers must have a written respiratory protection program and provide respirators, training, medical evaluations, and fit testing — at no cost to workers.

## Requirements for a required use respiratory protection program

- Have a knowledgeable person oversee and develop a written program.
- Identify respiratory hazards by using objective data or measure worker exposure by air monitoring.
- Select appropriate National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)-certified respirators for the hazards.
- Provide confidential medical evaluations before workers are fit-tested or use a respirator. After the initial medical evaluation, annual evaluations are not required.
- Train all workers annually who are required to wear a respirator.
- Ensure that respirators are clean, sanitary, and stored properly.
- Fit test workers who use tight-fitting respirators (including dust masks) according to the standard's Appendix A, Fit Testing Procedures. Seal checks are not a substitute for fit-testing. Fit test workers before initial use or whenever a different size, style, or manufacturer's respirator facepiece is used, and at least annually. Tight-fitting respirators may not be worn when facial hair is between the sealing surface of the facepiece and the face.
- Develop specific procedures for routine and emergency use.
- Develop a change-out schedule for canisters or cartridges. With pesticide use, follow the label requirements or, in the absence of any other information, change out the cartridge by the end of the shift.
- Evaluate the program periodically to ensure its effectiveness.



- Provide the medical evaluations, maintenance, and storage for rubber or elastomeric respirators at no cost to the employee.
- Create and maintain a written respiratory protection program that documents procedures ensuring that employees are medically able to use respirators, and that respirators are cleaned, stored, and maintained properly.

Purchasing respirators for voluntary respirator users is optional. Also, the employer is not required to incur any costs associated with the voluntary use of “filtering facepiece respirators” such as dust masks. Employees are not required to have a medical evaluation prior to the voluntary use of “filtering facepiece respirators.”

## Voluntary Respirator Use

Voluntary use is when an employee chooses to wear a respirator even though it’s not required by the employer or by any Oregon OSHA standard.

### Employer responsibilities:

- Evaluate workplace respiratory hazards. Once the employer has established there is no hazard that would require respiratory protection use, the employer may allow voluntary respirator use.
- Provide a copy of Appendix D of 437-004-1041, *Respiratory Protection*, to employees who voluntarily use any kind of respirators, including dust masks.
- Ensure the worker is medically able to use the respirator and the respirator itself does not create a hazard.



[Visit Oregon OSHA](#)

## Workers

Your employer cannot retaliate against you for reporting a workplace health or safety concern or violation. For more information about your rights, visit the Oregon OSHA website.

## Oregon OSHA Services



[Consultation Services](#)



[Respiratory Protection](#)

*The Technical Section of Oregon OSHA produced this fact sheet to highlight health and safety programs and rules. The information is intended to explain the rules and provide best practices to employers.*