



Voluntary Respirator Use

**This model form/template must be customized to meet your Agency’s needs.**

1. **Applicability**

Certain situations require the use of appropriate respirators. If a respirator is not specifically required, it may still be used in what is termed a "voluntary" fashion. Dust mist respirators, often called disposable respirators, may be used "voluntarily," provided that management has determined that no "significant hazard" exists. A "significant hazard" is defined to mean that either of the following conditions exists:

1. Oxygen level below 19.5%
2. Uncontrolled air contaminant exposure exceeding a short term exposure limit (STEL) or long term exposure limit (usually 8 hours) established by ACGIH, NIOSH, or OSHA. This information may be found on MSDS.
3. **Written Program**

Although Cal/OSHA Section 5144 waives a written program for voluntary use, all personnel should follow the following guidelines:

1. The employee will determine what level and type of respiratory protection are needed based on hazard analysis and review of any MSDS. The supervisor and employee will review this decision. It is critical that management not put employees at risk. If in doubt about the hazard, ask your supervisor, or contact a safety professional immediately.
2. Once it is determined that some minimal level of respiratory protection is desirable, selection may be made from a variety of disposable styles. Two strap respirators with an adjustable nosepiece offer the best protection within this class of respirators.
3. No medical monitoring is required, but management should warn the user that this respirator has limitations and only provides protection against nuisance dusts/mists/aerosols.
4. Fit testing per manufacturer's instructions is required.
5. Facial hair may be worn, but facial hair should not reduce the effectiveness of the respirator.
6. Training must consist of explaining why the respirator may be worn, how to put it on, and how to get the best fit.
7. Disposable respirators ***must not*** be interchanged. Often, they are disposed of after a single-use. If used for a very short term where the use is primarily precautionary such as weighing out a powder, it is OK to label the respirator with your name and reuse it a limited number of times until it becomes clogged and there is increased breathing resistance. In no case, should a disposal respirator be used for more than a single shift. Throw away disposable respirators when they become dirty or damaged.
8. Dust/mist respirator users shall be required to read Appendix D to Section 5144 and complete a waiver statement.

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, am requesting to voluntary use

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the following dust/mist respirator (\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)

for the following tasks (\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_).

I understand the hazard to myself is minimal, and I should be able to complete the task without a respirator, if necessary. I am not aware of any current health conditions or family history involving heart/lung disease or breathing disorders that may be affected by the wearing of a disposal respirator. Should I develop any health conditions, I will immediately stop work, notify my immediate supervisor, and consult with a medical professional for further evaluation.

**Appendix D to Section 5144. Information for Employees Using Respirators When Not Required Under the Standard**

Respirators are an effective method of protection against designated hazards when properly selected and worn. Respirator use is encouraged even when exposures are below the exposure limit, to provide an additional level of comfort and protection for workers. However, if a respirator is used improperly or not kept clean, the respirator itself can become a hazard to the worker. Sometimes, workers may wear respirators to avoid exposures to hazards, even if the amount of hazardous substance does not exceed the limits set by OSHA standards. If your employer provides respirators for your voluntary use, or if you provide your own respirator, you need to take certain precautions to be sure that the respirator itself does not present a hazard.

You should do the following:

1. Read and heed all instructions provided by the manufacturer on use, maintenance, cleaning and care, and warnings regarding the respirators limitations.

2. Choose respirators certified for use to protect against the contaminant of concern. NIOSH, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, certifies respirators. A label or statement of certification should appear on the respirator or respirator packaging. It will tell you what the respirator is designed for and how much it will protect you.

3. Do not wear your respirator into atmospheres containing contaminants for which your respirator is not designated to protect against. For example, a respirator designed to filter dust particles will not protect you against gases, vapors, or very small solid particles of fumes or smoke.

4. Keep track of your respirator so that you do not mistakenly use someone else's respirator.

I have read Appendix D to Section 5144 (above). My supervisor or the safety director can answer questions on respirator use.

Respirator User: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Immediate Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Department: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_