





## A Quick Guide to Respirators, Beards and Voluntary Use



By Janet Keyes, CIH, FAIHA

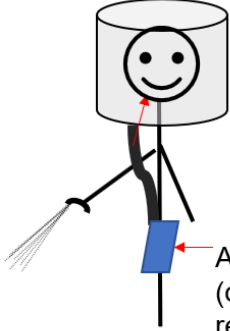

OSHA's second most frequently cited standard for automotive repair and maintenance, just behind Hazard Communication/Right to Know, is for respirators. That's no surprise to us, as we see violations all the time. We see people who must wear respirators – but have beards. Medical evaluations aren't done. Respirators aren't kept clean. People wear respirators that don't fit.

If respirators are worn incorrectly, the users may think they are being protected – but they aren't.

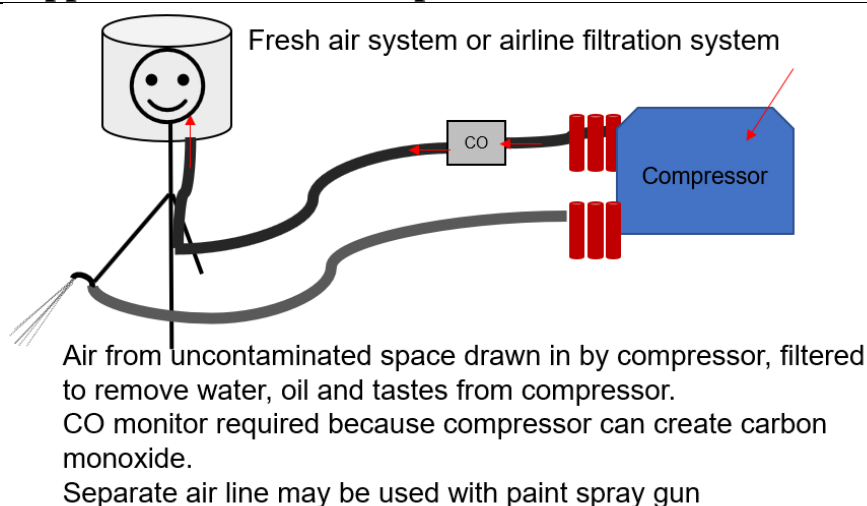
If you know what's required for different types of respirators, you stand a better chance of avoiding misuse and avoiding OSHA citations. This chart provides guidance on what's required for different types of respirators.

| If people use this   | Examples  | Requirements  |
|--|---|---|
| NIOSH approved N95 filtering facepiece (with or without an exhalation valve) |   | <b>If use is voluntary</b><br>Provide them with Appendix D to OSHA's respirator standard.<br><br>Beards are okay.   |
|  |   | <b>If use is mandatory</b><br>Provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- medical evaluations</li> <li>- fit testing</li> <li>- training</li> </ul> They must be clean-shaven.  |
| NIOSH approved half mask cartridge respirator                                |  | <b>If use is voluntary</b><br>Provide them with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Appendix D to OSHA's respirator standard</li> <li>– Medical evaluation</li> <li>– Sufficient training to safely use the respirator.</li> <li>–</li> </ul> Beards are allowed. |

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| NIOSH approved half mask cartridge respirator (continued) |  | <b>If use is mandatory</b><br>Provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- medical evaluations</li> <li>- fit testing</li> <li>- training</li> </ul> They must be clean-shaven. |
| Comfort mask (not NIOSH approved)                         |  | <b>Do not use</b>  |

| <b>Powered air purifying respirator</b>  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
|  | <p>Powered air purifying respirator (PAPR)</p> <p>Air goes through cartridge (organic vapor + filter) to remove contaminants</p>  |    |
| <b>How does it work?</b>   | Uses battery-operated blower to draw air from user's area through a cartridge (organic vapor + particulate filter for paint spraying) and blows that into user's facepiece.     |   |
| <b>What's required</b>   | Contaminant must be one that can be removed by cartridge.<br><br>Cartridges must be changed routinely (for most automotive painting, usually about 30 hours; 60 for waterborne) | Must provide <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- medical evaluations</li> <li>- training</li> </ul> If loose-fitting, beard is okay. |

## Supplied air or airline respirator



|                          |  |  |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| <b>How does it work?</b> | <p>Draws in uncontaminated air (such as from outside), usually via a compressor) and blows that into user's facepiece.</p> <p>If outside air is brought in by compressor, it needs to be filtered to remove water, oil, and any tastes or odors created by the compressor, and must have a carbon monoxide monitor because compressor can create carbon monoxide</p> |  |
| <b>What's required</b>   | <p>Compressor filters need to be maintained; carbon monoxide monitor needs to be calibrated routinely (e.g., monthly)</p> <p>Must use separate airline for paint gun.</p>  | <p>Must provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- medical evaluations</li> <li>- training</li> </ul> <p>If loose-fitting, beard okay.</p> |

Can you substitute one respirator for another? Sometimes. You can always use a more protective respirator, such as a PAPR instead of an N95 filtering facepiece, as long as it has an appropriate filter.

Can you eliminate the need for respirators? That's the best option – then you wouldn't have to try to figure out the requirements. But for those tasks where respirator use is required, do it right – provide the right amount of protection, make sure users can safely wear the respirator, verify that it fits well enough to protect them, and ensure they know how to use it correctly.

Questions? Contact Janet Keyes, CIH, FAIHA – 651-458-4930 or [jkeyes@chess-safety.com](mailto:jkeyes@chess-safety.com)

This article is intended to provide general information (no advice) about current safety topics. To discuss your specific concerns and how CHESS may help, please contact CHESS at 651-481-9787 or [chess@chess-safety.com](mailto:chess@chess-safety.com)

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