

OSHA requires a [respirator fit test](#) before the first use of a tight-fitting respirator and at least once every year after. The fit test makes sure the respirator's make, model, style, and size form a proper seal on the worker's face. Certain physical changes — such as weight loss or gain, major dental work, or facial surgery — also require a new test.



Why fit testing is needed

- **Ensure an airtight seal:** A respirator only works if it seals tightly to keep hazardous air out.
- **Confirm a user-specific fit:** Not every respirator fits every worker. Testing finds the model and size that fits you.
- **Meet OSHA compliance:** Fit testing is required to protect workers from harmful exposures.



Types of fit tests

- **Qualitative fit test:** A pass/fail method using taste, smell, or irritation (scent, sweet or bitter taste, or smoke) to check for leaks.
- **Quantitative fit test:** Uses a machine to measure the exact amount of leakage into the facepiece, giving a precise fit.
- **Modified Condensation Nuclei Counter (CNC) fit test:** A newer OSHA-approved protocol that uses a CNC (often with a PorterCount® device) to provide a quantitative measure of fit.





When to perform a fit test

Fit testing is required:

- **Before the first use** of a tight-fitting respirator.
- **Annually** (at least once every 12 months).
- **When changing models or sizes** of respirators.
- **After physical changes** like significant weight change, facial surgery, dentures, or scarring.



What to expect during a fit test

The process involves several exercises to test the seal and ensure the respirator remains effective during normal use:

- **Initial setup:** A selection of respirators is provided, and one is chosen for testing.
- **Medical evaluation:** Before the test, you must complete a health questionnaire to confirm you can safely wear a respirator.
- **Fit test protocol:** Movements such as normal breathing, deep breathing, turning your head, and talking help test the seal.
- **Pass/fail:** The test confirms whether the respirator provides an acceptable seal.



Responsibilities

Employers must:

- Provide fit testing before respirator use.
- Offer medical clearance for safe use.
- Supply a selection of respirators if one does not fit.
- Train workers on proper use, cleaning, and maintenance.

Workers must:

- Wear the respirator that was fit tested.
- Check the seal every time before use.
- Report any physical changes that may affect fit.
- Stay clean-shaven so the respirator seals.



Remember

Always use the same respirator that passed your fit test. Perform a seal check every time before entering a hazardous area. If the respirator no longer feels right or the seal changes, notify your supervisor and request a new fit test immediately.



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