

# VOLUNTARY RESPIRATOR USE AT DUKE

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*A guide for employees*

## DUKE POLICY ON VOLUNTARY RESPIRATOR USE

The Duke Occupational and Environmental Safety Office (OESO) administers a respiratory protection program to protect employees against recognized health hazards. However, some employees may be irritated by the presence of non-hazardous air contaminants. When use of a respirator will help to alleviate irritation and when the respirator itself is judged to pose no additional risk to the wearer, Duke Employees will be allowed to voluntarily use respirators for comfort reasons.

### **IF YOU WANT TO WEAR A RESPIRATOR YOU MUST**

- Obtain permission from your department and OESO to use a respirator.
- Read and understand the information contained in this brochure.
- Inspect your respirator before each use, and clean it after each use.
- Report any problems to your supervisor.

## WHAT YOU MUST KNOW ABOUT RESPIRATORY PROTECTION

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.

*Be sure the respirator itself does not create a hazard.*

If a respirator is used improperly or not kept clean, the respirator itself can become a hazard to the worker. Sometimes, workers may want to 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 MUST DO THE FOLLOWING**

- Read and heed all instructions provided by the manufacturer on use, maintenance, cleaning and care, and warnings regarding the respirator's limitations.
- 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.
- Do not wear your respirator into atmospheres containing contaminants for which your respirator is not designed. 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.
- Keep track of your respirator so that you do not mistakenly use someone else's respirator.

*The OESO will require the following information to approve respirator use.*

- Your name, Duke ID number, supervisor's name, and work telephone number for OESO records.
- The type of work you will be doing while wearing the respirator and the air contaminant of concern.
- The type of respirator you will use.

*Use of some respirators requires medical clearance.*

- Some respirators create a strain on the body because of increased breathing resistance or other effects. For these types of respirators, medical clearance is necessary to assure that you are not likely to be harmed by wearing the respirator.

- Medical Clearance Questionnaires will be provided by OESO and must be sent to Employee Occupational Health and Wellness for review. You may need to have a physical exam.
- The only type of respirator which will not require medical clearance is a dust mask, or filtering face piece.



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