

Voluntary Respirator Use

Chapter 296-842 WAC

Rule

WAC 296-842-110

Voluntary Respirator Use Requirements

Important:

- Respirator use is **not** voluntary if a respiratory hazard, such as exposure to a substance over the permissible exposure limit (PEL) or hazardous exposure to an airborne biological hazard, is present.
- To evaluate respiratory hazards in your workplace, see chapter 296-841 WAC, Respiratory Hazards.
- Some requirements in this section do not apply if only filtering-facepiece respirators are used voluntarily.
- Some filtering-facepiece respirators are equipped with a sorbent layer for absorbing “nuisance” organic vapors. These can be used for voluntary use, but aren’t NIOSH certified for protection against hazardous concentrations of organic vapor.



Voluntary Respirator Use

Chapter 296-842 WAC

Rule

WAC 296-842-11005

Make sure voluntary use of respirators is safe



Definition:

Voluntary use is respirator use that is requested by the employee **and** permitted by the employer when **no** respiratory hazard exists.

Important:

If you choose to require respirator use, use is **not** voluntary and the required use sections of this chapter apply.

(1) Make sure voluntary respirator use does **not**:

(a) Interfere with an employee's ability to work safely, such as restricting necessary vision or radio communication

or

(b) Create health hazards.



Note:

Examples of health hazards include:

- Skin irritation, dermatitis, or other health effects caused by using a dirty respirator
- Illness created by sharing contaminated respirators
- Health effects caused by use of an unsafe air supply, such as carbon monoxide poisoning.

-Continued-



Voluntary Respirator Use

Chapter 296-842 WAC

Rule

WAC 296-842-11005 (Continued)

- (2) Provide all voluntary respirator users with the advisory information in Table 2 at no cost to them.



Note:

If you have provided employees with the advisory information required in the previous section, WAC 296-62-07117, you don't need to provide the additional information in Table 2 to those employees.

- (3) Develop and maintain a written program that includes the following:
- (a) Medical evaluation provisions as specified in WAC 296-842-140.
 - (b) Procedures to properly clean and disinfect respirators, according to WAC 296-842-22015, if they are reused.
 - (c) How to properly store respirators, according to WAC 296-842-17010, so that using them doesn't create hazards.
 - (d) Procedures to make sure there is a safe air supply, according to WAC 296-842-200, when using air-line respirators and SCBAs.
 - (e) Effective training to ensure respirator use does **not** create a hazard.



Exemption:

If employees use only filtering-facepiece respirators and do so only voluntarily, you don't need to develop and maintain a written program.



Note:

- Pay for medical evaluations, training, travel related costs, and wages. You do **not** need to pay for respirators employees use only voluntarily.
- If you have both voluntary and required respirator users, you may choose to treat voluntary users as required users. Doing this exceeds the requirements in this section.

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Voluntary Respirator Use

Chapter 296-842 WAC

Rule

WAC 296-842-11005 (Continued)

(4) Use Table 2 to provide information to employees who voluntarily use any type of respirator.

Table 2
Advisory Information for Employees
Who Voluntarily Use Respirators

- Respirators protect against airborne hazards when properly selected and used. Respirator usage that is required by WISHA or your employer is not voluntary use. With **required use**, your employer will need to provide further training and meet additional requirements in this chapter. WISHA recommends voluntary use of respirators when exposure to substances is below WISHA permissible exposure limits (PELs) because respirators can provide you an additional level of comfort and protection.
- If you choose to voluntarily use a respirator (whether it's provided by you or your employer) be aware that **respirators can create hazards for you**, the user. You can avoid these hazards if you know how to use your respirator properly and how to keep it clean. Take these steps:
 - Read and follow all instructions provided by the manufacturer about use, maintenance (cleaning and care), and warnings regarding the respirator's limitations.
 - Choose respirators that have been certified for use to protect against the substance of concern. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) certifies respirators. If a respirator isn't certified by NIOSH, you have no guarantee that it meets minimum design and performance standards for workplace use.
 - A NIOSH approval label will appear on or in the respirator packaging. It will tell you what protection the respirator provides.
 - Keep track of your respirator so you do not mistakenly use someone else's.
 - Do **not** wear your respirator into:
 - Required use situations when you are only allowed voluntary use.
 - Atmospheres containing hazards that your respirator isn't designed to protect against.

For example, a respirator designed to filter dust particles will not protect you against solvent vapor, smoke, or oxygen deficiency.

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Voluntary Respirator Use

Chapter 296-842 WAC

Rule

WAC 296-842-11010

Keep voluntary use program records



Exemption:

If employees use only filtering-facepiece respirators voluntarily, you don't need to follow these recordkeeping requirements.

- (1) Keep copies of:
 - (a) Your current written respirator program
 - (b) Written recommendations from the licensed health care professional (LHCP)
- (2) Allow records required by this section to be examined and copied by affected employees and their representatives.



Reference:

See chapter 296-802 WAC, Employee and medical exposure records, for additional requirements that apply to medical records.



Notes
