



Communicable Disease

Respiratory Protection Program

Fit Testing FAQ

What is a fit test?

A fit test is a procedure performed to ensure that a respirator chosen for protection against respiratory hazards provides the best fit with a proper seal limiting leakage of identified respiratory hazards between the facepiece and the user's face.

- Note: a fit test is not the same as a seal check. A seal check is performed every time a respirator is worn to check for proper fit and seal to the user's face before respiratory hazard exposure. Additional seal check information can be found in [NIOSH's Seal Check FAQ](#).

Is fit testing required?

Yes. Fit testing is mandatory for all employees required to wear tight-fitting facepiece respirators. Employees should be allowed to select a suitable respirator based on the respiratory hazards identified, and fit testing should be performed with the employee wearing the selected respirator. The fit tested employee should then only use the respirator model and size they have been fit tested for.

What types of fit testing are available?

There are two types of OSHA-approved fit testing:

- Qualitative fit testing gives subjective results as it is dependent on the user's sensitivity to the test agent's odor or taste, or irritants that elicit an involuntary physical reaction. This type of fit testing is more cost effective but can only be used for air-purifying respirators.
- Quantitative fit testing gives objective results as it uses instrumentation to test the internal and external volumetric leakage of the ambient solution used, essentially, measuring airborne particle concentration both inside and outside the respirator. This type of fit testing is expensive but can be used for all types of respirators.

How many OSHA-approved fit testing protocols are there?

There are four qualitative protocols and three quantitative protocols. They can be found at [29 CFR 1910.134 Appendix A: Fit Testing Protocols](#).

What is the cost of fit testing to employees?

Fit testing and a variety of respirator models and sizes should be provided at no cost to the employees. Fit testing should also be performed during work hours or at a time and place that is convenient to the employees.

When should fit testing be performed?

Fit testing should be performed before initial respirator use and annually thereafter at minimum. Additionally, fit testing should be performed when there are changes that invalidate previous results such as:

- Change in types of respirators available.
- Change in the type of respiratory hazards present in the workplace.
- Physical/medical changes that cause a change in respirator fit or use.
- Change in job requirements that impacts respirator use.

Who performs fit testing?

Fit testing should be performed by trained fit testers on-site or contracted vendors trained in the principles of respiratory protection. Fit testers should be able to enforce the principles of respiratory protection and provide training on the proper use of respirators used during testing.

Is there required certification for fit testers?

No, there is no required certification for fit testers. However, fit testers should be appropriately trained on principles of respiratory protection and should be able to educate program participants on the proper fit and use of respirators.

Where can we find fit testing training resources?

OSHA fit testing videos can be found at [OSHA Respiratory Protection Training Videos](#).

Additionally, there are numerous private entities that offer fit testing and training resources online and in person; they can be found through an online search.

What information is required to perform a fit test?

- Results of the medical evaluation.
- Type of respirator to be used.
- Additional PPE/safety equipment to be worn with the selected respirator.
- Type of respirator hazard being mitigated.
- Type of job duties.

Can employees who maintain facial hair be fit tested?

No. Employees that maintain facial hair cannot be fit tested for a tight-fitting facepiece respirator as the facial hair compromises the respirator seal. These employees however can use loose-fitting facepiece respirators (i.e.: PAPR) that do not require fit testing.

Are there alternatives for employees that do not pass fit testing?

The employer should ensure that there are respiratory protection protocols and procedures in place to guide employee roles and responsibilities in order to minimize exposure to respiratory hazards. Additionally, the employer can provide employees with loose-fitting facepiece respirators for use.

Where are fit test results stored and for how long?

Fit test results (both pass or fail) should be stored in employee files for up to twelve months or until the next fit testing.

What type of review training is provided during fit testing?

Some elements of the training that should be provided during fit testing include:

- Determining respirator fit and positioning on face.
- Donning and doffing respirators.
- User seal check.
- Dealing with respirator malfunctions.
- Respirator comfort.
- Adequacy of respirator fit and protection.