

ADVISORY INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYEES WHO VOLUNTARILY USE RESPIRATORS

This information applies to the voluntary use of respirators. Respirators protect against airborne hazards when properly selected and used.

When respirator use is considered *required* by regulations or by your supervisor, or you are voluntarily wearing a reusable respirator (e.g., cartridge or powered air-purifying respirator), additional requirements apply such as medical clearance, training, and fit testing, per the Washington Administrative Code ([WAC 296-842 Respirators](#)). Contact the Respirator Program Administrator at uwresp@uw.edu for additional assistance.

Voluntary use of respirators is permitted as long as exposure to substances remains below the Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act (WISHA) permissible exposure limits (PELs) or there is no exposure to an airborne biological hazard. Voluntary use of 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, if not used correctly. 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 that tell you what protection the respirator provides.
- Keep track of your respirator so you don't mistakenly use someone else's.

Do not wear your respirator into:

- Atmospheres containing hazards that your respirator isn't designed to protect against. For example, a respirator designed to filter dust particles won't protect you against solvent vapor, smoke, or oxygen deficiency.
- Situations where your supervisor requires the use of a respirator and it is not voluntary, since additional requirements are required to be met.

By signing this form, I verify that I have read and understand the information provided. Provide a copy of this signed form to your supervisor.

Employee Signature

Date