

Worker Protection Standard

REQUIREMENTS FOR RESPIRATOR USE

What is the Worker Protection Standard?

The Worker Protection Standard (WPS), 40 CFR Part 170, is a federal regulation issued by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and enforced, in Iowa, by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. The WPS applies whenever a pesticide is used in the production of agricultural plants that has an “Agricultural Use Requirements” section on the product label. The rule protects primarily workers (people employed to perform work activities related to the production of agricultural plants) and pesticide handlers (people employed to mix, load, or apply pesticides for use on agricultural establishments in the production of agricultural plants).

What are the WPS Requirements for Respirator Use?

When the label of an agricultural pesticide specifies that using a respirator is required, anyone using that product **MUST FOLLOW** WPS personal protective equipment requirements found in 40 CFR 170.507. It is the employer’s responsibility to select the correct respirator specified by the pesticide label and provide the handler:

- A medical evaluation by a physician or other licensed health care professional to ensure the handler’s physical ability to safely wear the respirator*
- Annual fit testing for each type of respirator that the handler will be using*
- Annual training on the use, maintenance, cleaning, and storage of the respirator

*Refer to the document, Iowa Respirator Fit Testing for a listing of providers.

Medical Evaluation

Each handler must be medically evaluated to make sure they can use a respirator without putting their health at risk. Depending on the employer, a questionnaire may be provided online or in-person. An in-person health examination may also be required. The handler and their employer will be provided with a written medical determination (medical release) stating whether the handler is medically able to use the respirator and any restrictions on their use of the respirator. The medical evaluation must be done before the handler uses the respirator and before the fit test is conducted. Any employee refusing a medical evaluation must not be permitted to work with pesticide products that require respirators

Respirator Fit Testing

All handlers who use respirators with tight-fitting facepieces must be fit-tested with a respirator of the same make, model, style, and size they will be using for handling activities. Loose-fitting respirators (e.g., helmets, hoods) do not require fit testing but do require medical clearance.

Handlers must be fit-tested annually and whenever they change facepiece models, styles, or sizes. An additional fit test must be conducted if any drastic changes in physical appearance occur within the year that cause the seal to become compromised.

There are two types of fit tests: qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative fit testing (QLFT) uses your sense of taste or smell, or your reaction to an irritant to detect leakage into the respirator facepiece. Quantitative fit testing (QNFT) uses specialized equipment to measure the actual amount of leakage around the seal.

Respirator Training

Before handlers can use their respirator and annually after, their employers must provide respirator training that includes:

- Why the respirator is needed
- What the respirator does and does not do
- When and how to use a respirator
- When and why fit testing is needed
- How to store and maintain the respirator
- How improper use can reduce the respirator's abilities
- How to use a respirator in unexpected situations
- How to recognize signs and symptoms that may affect respirator use

Employers can develop their own training, purchase training products, or using other resources as long as all the topics required by OSHA, 29 CFR 1910.134(k), are included.

Recordkeeping

The following respirator records must be kept by the employer for at least two years:

- Copy of medical evaluation
- Results of respirator fit test
- Documentation of respirator training
- Daily inspection and seal check*
- Respirator cleaning and storage*
- Respirator maintenance according to manufacturer's recommendations, including replacement of canisters/ filters/ cartridges following recommended schedule*

*When an agricultural establishment is majority-owned by one family, the WPS exempts owners and members of their immediate family from these recordkeeping requirements.

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