

Agriculture Respiratory Protection

437-004-1041
Division 4/I

Agriculture Respiratory
Protection

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Many agriculture activities create respiratory health hazards to workers. Some examples of air contaminant hazards could include pesticide dusts, mists, or vapors; dusty fields; exposure to moldy hay, straw, and grain; dangerous hydrogen sulfide accumulations in manure pits and sump pumps; nitrogen dioxide in conventional silos; and many others.

Required Respirator Use

The Oregon OSHA agriculture Respiratory Protection Standard, 437-004-1041, effective date: March 1, 2007, establishes employer requirements to protect workers. This new version of the rule is clearer about employer responsibility when it comes to employee respirator use.

Respirators are **required** when workers are exposed to hazardous air contaminants over the Permissible Exposure Limits (PEL), when a pesticide label requires their use, or if the employer requires the use for any reason.

Employers must have a respirator program for employees who are required to wear a respirator for normal work and for emergencies. Employers must provide respirators, training, and medical evaluations at no cost to workers.



Requirements for an acceptable program

- Have a knowledgeable person oversee and develop a written program.
- Identify respiratory hazards by using objective data or measure worker exposure by air monitoring.
- Select appropriate National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)-certified respirators for the hazards.
- Provide confidential medical evaluations before workers are fit-tested and use a respirator. After the initial medical evaluation, annual evaluations are not required.
- Fit-test workers who use tight-fitting respirators (including dust masks) according to the standard's Appendix A, Fit-Testing Procedures. Seal checks are not a substitute for fit-testing. Fit-test workers before initial use or whenever a different size, style, or manufacturer's respirator facepiece is used, and at least annually. Tight-fitting respirators may not be worn when facial hair is between the sealing surface of the facepiece and the face.
- Develop specific procedures for routine and emergency use.
- Train all workers annually who are required to wear a respirator.
- Ensure that the respirator is clean, sanitary, and stored properly.
- Develop a change-out schedule for canisters or cartridges. With pesticide use, follow the label requirements or, in the absence of any other information, change out the cartridge by the end of the shift.
- Evaluate the program periodically to ensure its effectiveness.

Voluntary Respirator Use

Voluntary use is when an employee **chooses** to wear a respirator, even though it's not required by the employer or by any OR-OSHA standard.

Employers must:

- Evaluate workplace respiratory hazards. Once the employer has established that a respiratory hazard does not exist, voluntary respiratory protection may be used if the employer allows it. Employers do not have to purchase respirators for voluntary respirator users.
- Provide a copy of Appendix D of 437-004-1041, Respiratory Protection, to employees who voluntarily use any kind of respirators, including dust masks.
- Provide the medical evaluations, maintenance, and storage for rubber or elastomeric respirators, other than dust masks, at no cost to the employee.
- Ensure the worker is medically able to use the respirator and the respirator itself does not create a hazard.



A NIOSH-certified dust mask is considered a “filtering facepiece” tight-fitting respirator. The employer is not required to incur any costs associated with the voluntary use of “filtering facepieces.”

Additional Resources:

www.cdc.gov/nasd/docs/d001001-d001100/d001011/d001011.pdf

www.cdc.gov/nasd/

www.cbs.state.or.us/external/oshapdf/rules/division_4/div4i.pdf

www.cdc.gov/niosh/userguid.html

