

TOOLBOX TOPICS

DUST MASKS

Dust masks or filtering face-pieces (figure 1) are one of the most common forms of respiratory protection in the workplace. However, dust masks are also the most misused forms of respirators.

Before wearing a dust mask, you must be trained in the proper use, maintenance, and care of the respirator and you must be fit-tested for the type of respirator you will be expected to wear.

Dust masks cannot be worn by individuals who have facial hair that prevents a proper seal between the respirator and the face.

Certain dust masks are designed with an exhalation valve (figure 2). The exhalation valve is designed to allow the wearer to breathe more freely. It does not increase the filtering effect of the respirator.

Dust masks are only designed to be a barrier between you and harmful contaminants that may enter your lungs. The use of dust masks is limited and knowing the proper use and limits of your dust mask may prevent injuries.

All employees using dust masks must be made aware of Appendix D of the 1910.134 OSHA Respirator Standards.

