

Pesticide Safety Information

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF
PESTICIDE REGULATION
1001 I Street,
Sacramento,
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Protecting Yourself From Breathing Pesticides in Non-Agricultural Settings

Sometimes, pesticide spray can stay in the air that you breathe.

One way to protect yourself is to wear a breathing mask called a respirator, like the one in the picture below.

WHEN SHOULD I WEAR A RESPIRATOR?

You **must** wear a respirator anytime the pesticide label requires one. You **may** need to wear a respirator if the pesticide label says, "Avoid breathing vapor or mist."

Your supervisor must give you a respirator when it is needed. You must wear it.

WHAT TRAINING DO I NEED?

Before you use a respirator for the first time, you must be trained how to use it safely. After that, you must get the training again every year. Training must tell you when you need to wear a respirator and show you how to safely wear it. You must also be told about what the respirator can't protect you against.

HOW DO I GET THE RIGHT RESPIRATOR?

There are different kinds of respirators that will protect you from different dangers. When using pesticides that could irritate your eyes, wear a full-face respirator to protect your eyes and lungs. Some fumigant labels require you to wear a self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA). The pesticide label or your supervisor will tell you what kind of respirator to wear.

It is also very important that the respirator fits your face. Respirators come in different sizes. You must know how to check your respirator fit. While you are checking how your respirator fits and getting used to it, wear it in an area where there are no pesticides. Your supervisor or someone he hires will make sure it fits your face.



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On the outside of the respirator it must say that it is approved by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

CAN ANYONE USE A RESPIRATOR?

Breathing through a respirator can be very hard for some people. People with problems such as high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease or a perforated eardrum may not be able to use respirators. If you are using a pesticide and are supposed to use a respirator, your supervisor must ask you if you have any of these health problems. If you do, you must get a doctor's permission to use a respirator. If you have told your supervisor that you might have a health problem, the doctor must examine you. The doctor then must give his report to your supervisor. Your supervisor must follow the doctor's written orders about whether or not you can wear a respirator.

IF I HAVE A MUSTACHE OR A BEARD, CAN I WEAR A RESPIRATOR?

- If you have a beard, a bushy mustache, or long sideburns, a regular respirator won't protect you because the mustache, beard or sideburns keep it from making a tight seal on your face. You need to use a special respirator
- If your supervisor doesn't have one of these special respirators, you cannot do the work.

HOW CAN I TELL IF MY RESPIRATOR IS WORKING?

Most respirators do not really clean the air. What they do is stop most harmful chemicals from getting into your lungs. They do this with special filters. But these filters stop working after a while. Then the pesticide will pass through and you will breathe it in. If you notice a smell or taste, if your eyes or throat burn, or if it gets hard for you to breathe, leave the area **RIGHT AWAY**. Go to a safe area that contains no pesticides. Then take off your respirator

and look at it carefully. Is it torn or worn out? If there are no cracks or other problems you can see, you may need to change the filter.

Because many pesticides do not have a smell or cause irritation, your supervisor must replace the filter often.

THE FILTER MUST BE REPLACED

- when directions on the pesticide label say so, *or*
- when the respirator maker says it should be replaced, *or*
- when you first notice smell, taste or irritation, *or*
- at the end of each workday.

Follow the rule that replaces the filter soonest.

REMEMBER: Respirators only protect you from breathing chemicals. Most of the time when pesticides are used, protecting your skin is also important.

WHO TAKES CARE OF THE RESPIRATOR?

When respirators are broken, your supervisor must fix them. If they cannot be fixed, your supervisor must get new ones.

Respirators should be cleaned and inspected regularly by a person who is trained to do this job. Do not use someone else's respirator without cleaning and disinfecting it first. If the other person has a cold or the flu, you can get sick, too. It's best if each worker has his own respirator. Or you can use respirators that can be thrown away after they are used.

Respirators should be stored so the face piece does not become bent. They need to be protected from dust, sunlight, and big changes in temperature. Water or certain chemicals can also damage them. Hard plastic containers with lids are good storage containers for respirators. Store respirators and all personal protective equipment away from pesticides.



If you don't get all the information you need in your training, or from your supervisor, you should call your County Agricultural Commissioner, or the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) for more information. You can find the Commissioner's number in your local white pages phone directory. DPR numbers are:

- Anaheim (714) 279-7690
- Fresno (559) 445-5401
- Sacramento (916) 324-4100