

# Voluntary Use of Filtering Facepiece (FFP) Respirators

## What is an FFP?

An FFP, also called a dust mask, is a negative-pressure, particulate respirator in which:

1. The filter is an integral part of the facepiece; or
2. The entire facepiece is composed of the filtering medium.

## What is Voluntary Use?

The phrase voluntary use of a filtering facepiece (FFP) refers to situations in which:

1. An employee requests an FFP or provides his or her own FFP; and
2. The employee is not required by OSHA to use an FFP for protection from hazardous air contaminants.

Although FFPs are respirators, OSHA places no medical limitations on their use. – Check this.

## What Is Permitted?

Employees may voluntarily use FFPs in accordance with the following guidelines:

1. Any Postal Service employee may voluntarily wear an FFP as long as the FFP itself does not cause a hazardous condition and no hazardous air contaminants are present.
2. FFPs do not necessarily protect against exposure to toxic materials. If an employee needs protection against such exposure, the Postal Service must supply an appropriate respirator in accordance with 29 CFR 1910.134.
3. Local management will provide an FFP upon request or an employee may use his or her own FFP.
4. Prior to voluntarily wearing an FFP, whether it is provided by the Postal Service or by the employee, any employee requesting wear of an FFP must be given the following required information:
  - a. The safety talk provided at Attachment 1 and
  - b. 29 CFR 1910.134 Appendix D, Mandatory Information for Employees Using Respirators When Not Required Under the Standard. (See attachment 2).
5. Document that this required information was provided to employees using FFP. Use a simple, locally-developed spreadsheet or hard copy training record.
6. FFPs supplied by the Postal Service for voluntary use must be approved by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).
7. FFPs worn voluntarily by employees are not subject to the medical evaluation, cleaning, storage, and maintenance provisions of the written RP program.
8. An improved FFP fit may be obtained following the instructions at Attachment 3.
9. FFPs used voluntarily may not be worn if they are soiled, unclean, or contaminated, or if they interfere with the employee's ability to work safely.

## What Is Not Permitted?

1. Employees may not voluntarily use tight-fitting, air-purifying respirators or supplied air respirators (devices that provide clean breathing air from uncontaminated sources).
2. The most commonly used tight-fitting respirators (half-face or full-face) include elastomeric respirators, which are normally made of a rubberlike material in which an appropriate filter (i.e., canister) can be attached. Voluntary use of tight-fitting, air-purifying respirators and lesser-used supplied air respirators is prohibited.

## Questions, Who to Call?

1. Contact your Facility Safety Coordinator.
2. Contact your supporting District Safety Office.
3. MI EL-810-2009-4, Personal Protective Equipment and Respiratory Protection Programs.

## Attachment 1

### Safety Talk - Safe Use of Filtering Facepieces (Dust Masks)

The following information must be shared with all employees who voluntarily wear a filtering facepiece (dust mask) on the job:

1. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires that you be given the information provided in Attachment 2 if you wear a filtering facepiece (FFP), also known as a dust mask, while working.
2. This information applies whether the Postal Service offers you an FFP or you choose to wear your own.
3. Postal Service employees may wear an FFP while working unless it would cause a hazardous condition (see OSHA Appendix D).
4. Employees are not permitted to wear tight-fitting, air-purifying respirators or other non-FFP respirators unless they are supplied by the Postal Service in conformance with OSHA regulations. This policy is for your protection.
5. The information OSHA requires the Postal Service to share with you deals mostly with tight-fitting respirators (such as the rubber-mask-type with canisters attached). However, some of this information is also pertinent to FFPs. Note the following points when wearing an FFP, whether it is your own or it is offered for your comfort by the Postal Service:
  - a. Read and follow the instructions for a more comfortable fit and effectiveness. Follow recommendations for fit testing and use, storage, and cleaning, because a dirty FFP can cause skin irritation or other health problems.
  - b. FFPs may be suitable to provide comfort and to avoid allergens (like pollen) and nuisance dust. However, they do not necessarily protect you from toxic materials. If necessary, the Postal Service will supply you with a carefully selected respirator for that purpose in conformance with OSHA regulations.
  - c. Do not wear an FFP if it causes breathing problems or other discomfort. Consult with safety or medical personnel.

## Attachment 2

### Appendix D to 29 CFR 1910.134

#### *\*Mandatory Information for Employees Using Respirators When Not Required Under the Standard*

“Respirators are an effective method of protection against designated hazards when properly selected and worn. Respirator use is encouraged, even when exposures are below the exposure limit, to provide an additional level of comfort and protection for workers. However, if a respirator is used improperly or not kept clean, the respirator itself can become a hazard to the worker. Sometimes, workers may wear respirators to avoid exposures to hazards, even if the amount of hazardous substance does not exceed the limits set by OSHA standards. If your employer provides respirators for your voluntary use, or if you provide your own respirator, you need to take certain precautions to be sure that the respirator itself does not present a hazard.

“You should do the following:

1. Read and heed all instructions provided by the manufacturer on use, maintenance, cleaning and care, and warnings regarding the respirator’s limitations.
2. Choose respirators certified for use to protect against the contaminant of concern. NIOSH, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, certifies respirators. A label or statement of certification should appear on the respirator or respirator packaging. It will tell you what the respirator is designed for and how much it will protect you.
3. Do not wear your respirator into atmospheres containing contaminants for which your respirator is not designed to protect against. For example, a respirator designed to filter dust particles will not protect you against gases, vapors, or very small solid particles of fumes or smoke.
4. Keep track of your respirator so that you do not mistakenly use someone else’s respirator.”

### Attachment 3

#### Voluntary N-95 Filtering Facepiece - User Donning Instructions & Seal Checks.

Please follow these instructions each time the N-95 is used:

- It is important to obtain a proper fit.
- User should be clean-shaven. Any facial hair, such as beards or long sideburns, may prevent the respirator from fitting properly.
- Eyewear should not interfere with face to facepiece seal.
- These instructions are generic. Also consult the respirator manufacturer's recommended procedures for performing a user seal check.

1. Hold respirator in hand with molded nose contour (narrow end) at finger tips, allowing headstraps to fall below hand.



2. Place respirator under chin with molded nose contour (narrow end) up. Nose cushion must be un-creased inside respirator. Raise top strap to top back of head. Pull shorter bottom strap over head, below ears, to around neck. **Do not wear with only one strap.**



3. Adjust respirator for comfortable fit.



4. Each time user dons a mask, the seal should be fit checked. Cover front of respirator by cupping both hands. **INHALE SHARPLY.** A negative pressure should be felt inside respirator. Next **EXHALE, If any leakage is detected at respirator edges, adjust straps by pulling back along the sides and/or reposition respirator.** Repeat until sealed properly, otherwise see your supervisor.

