

## ADVISORY INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYEES WHO VOLUNTARILY USE RESPIRATORS

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This information must be provided to University of Washington personnel who voluntarily use respirators in the workplace where is *not* required, regardless of whether the respirator was supplied by the University.

This information does *not* apply to respirator use that is required by regulations or indicated by a [risk assessment](#). When respirator use is required, additional requirements apply, such as medical clearance, training, and fit testing, per the Washington Administrative Code ([WAC](#)) [296-842 Respirators](#). Contact the UW Respirator Program Administrator at [uwresp@uw.edu](mailto:uwresp@uw.edu) for additional assistance.

Respirators protect against airborne hazards when properly selected and used. Voluntary use of respirators can provide the wearer with an additional level of comfort and protection.

Voluntary use of respirators is permitted when exposure to potentially hazardous substances remains below the Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act (WISHA) permissible exposure limits (PELs) for a specific substance.

If you choose to voluntarily use a respirator (whether it's provided by you or your employer), be aware that **respirators can create hazards** for you, if not used correctly. You can avoid these hazards if you know how to use your respirator properly and how to keep it clean.

Take these steps:

- Read and follow all instructions provided by the manufacturer about use, maintenance (cleaning and care), and warnings regarding the respirator's limitations.
- [Choose respirators](#) that have been certified for use to protect against the substance of concern. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) certifies respirators. If a respirator isn't certified by NIOSH, you have no guarantee that it meets minimum design and performance standards for workplace use. A NIOSH approval label will appear on or in the respirator packaging that tell you what protection the respirator provides.
- Keep track of your respirator so you don't mistakenly use someone else's.

**Do not** wear your respirator into:

- Atmospheres containing hazards that your respirator isn't designed to protect against. For example, a respirator designed to filter dust particles won't protect you against solvent vapor, smoke, or oxygen deficiency.
- Situations where your supervisor requires the use of a respirator and it is not voluntary, since additional requirements are required to be met.

Visit the UW [Environmental Health & Safety website](#) for information on the use, care, storage, and disposal of respirators.