

Comfort Considerations When Picking Respiratory Protection

Respiratory protection may be necessary at your job, but there are many options out there designed to help comfortably protect you from the hazards you face. It's important to keep in mind that when making the choice of what type of respiratory protection to use and that you also select products from a reputable manufacturer that offers science-based, innovative solutions, which comply with regulatory certification standards.

Whether you are considering disposable respirators (DR)/filtering facepiece respirators (FFR), reusable (elastomeric) options, powered air purifying respirators (PAPR), or even supplied air solutions in Canada, consulting with a reputable manufacturer to help you make your choice can be very helpful. Also, there are many comfort considerations and it helps to discuss the options with the help of a respiratory protection specialist. Let's learn a little bit more about some of the comfort benefits of different types of [respiratory protection equipment](#).

Disposable Respirators (DR) – Filtering Facepiece Respirators (FFR)



First, always look for an N95 or other FFR to have achieved certification by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). There are models that have adjustable nose clips, nose foam, fixed headbands, adjustable buckle straps, and there are models that come in three-panel or flat-fold style for not just comfort but convenience. Many of these features are designed to help enhance comfort, and help you achieve a proper seal, in order to help deliver the level of protection this type of respirator is designed to achieve.

Some FFRs offer an exhalation valve that can result in easier breathing than non-

valved respirators. 3M disposable respirators contain no component made from natural rubber latex. There are also disposable respirator options that are designed to be flame resistant. N95s are known for being a lightweight option and select products have filter media that are designed to help provide relief against certain nuisance-level odour.

FFRs are disposable, convenient, economical, and can be used in many types of industries from healthcare to welding to mining and manufacturing, depending on the model you choose and the job you are doing. They are often compatible with other PPE such as eye protection, hearing protection, and protective apparel, such as coveralls.

Reusable Respirators (RR) Elastomeric


A big benefit of reusable respirators is protection and comfort at a reasonable price. There are many different models of reusable respirators to help meet the needs of many types of workers who want to be comfortable and protected whether they are in hot environments, tight-fitting spaces, or working long shifts. Half or full facepiece reusable respirators can help protect against both particles and/or gases and vapours that can be used for numerous applications and hazardous environments. RRs are engineered to help deliver comfort with a wide field of vision. For instance, there are full face RR models that feature a soft silicone nose cup and faceseal that help provide long wear-time comfort as well as a large lens that allows for excellent peripheral vision.

Like DR, some [RR models](#) offer a valve feature built in to help with easier breathing and comfort as well as some models with a passive speaking diaphragm that is positioned to promote easier communication capability. There is an option that offers a quick latch drop-down that makes it easy to don/doff in a non-contaminated area. There are even some RR models available that are compatible with other types of respiratory PPE like PAPRs and supplied air.

A disposable or reusable respirator can't give workers the protection it was designed to provide unless it is selected and worn correctly during all periods of exposure. Fit testing is an important part of a respiratory protection program mandated by provincial and federal regulations in Canada that cite to follow CSA Z94.4 standard – Selection, Use and Care of respirators that should be part of your employer's safety process.

PAPRs and Supplied Air

A [PAPR system](#) uses a blower instead of lung power to draw air through the cartridge and/or filter. This can help you breathe more naturally while feeling a constant airflow in your headtop, which can help provide additional comfort if you happen to be working in hot and humid environments. Integrated face shields on certain headtops for specific PAPR systems help protect eyes and faces from debris, sparks, and other hazards. At the same time, these respirator options may offer a wide field of vision,



helping to make it easier to see your surroundings and perform the necessary tasks at hand.

With some respirator systems, beards and heavy sideburns can be a problem, as they can interfere with the seal of certain facepieces. There are PAPR systems available with headtops designed to accommodate limited facial hair, enabling additional protection options for your employees. This can also benefit workers who want to keep their facial hair for medical, religious, style, or other reasons. Talk to your respiratory specialist for the different configurations that can accommodate facial hair.

Both loose-fitting headgear on PAPRs and supplied air respirators do not require a fit test, unlike disposable or reusable respirator options. This can potentially help save time and money as fit testing with tight-fitting facepieces must be performed at least annually.

We're Here to Help You Pick a Comfortable Respiratory Protection Option

So, as you can see, there are a wide variety of innovative technologies and features designed to enhance user comfort and help promote wear time for every type of [respiratory protection product](#). Let us help you find comfort options that work for you. For help selecting respiratory protection equipment, please do not hesitate to reach out to our respiratory protection specialists for assistance today.