

Let's Learn More About How to Evaluate Respiratory Protection Choices

Wearing a respirator, whether by choice or because of the requirements of your job, is about protection. There are also other considerations that go into choosing what type of respirator you end up using. Protection, fit, comfort, quality and durability – these are all key criteria that should be considered. Whether you are an expert in making these decisions or are newer to choosing respiratory protection equipment, you want peace of mind that you are making the right choice for your workplace. But how do you evaluate these qualities? Let's take a deeper dive into the world of respiratory protection.

Protection

Protection is paramount. Employers are responsible to keep their employees safe at work. As an employee wearing [respiratory protection](#) products in Canada, is the protection you are seeking approved by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)? Does what you are wearing meet the requirements of your job? Everyone wants to return safely to their homes at night and live a healthy life. Wearing proper respiratory protection is part of that.

One challenge with airborne contaminants, however, is that some are so small that you cannot see them. Also, over time there are multiple hazardous airborne contaminants that have been associated with long-term health problems from exposure to things like [welding fumes](#), isocyanates, silica dusts, and other substances. Choosing appropriate respiratory protection that will help [protect you from exposure](#) above the occupational exposure limit is a vital step when it comes to helping to protect yourself.

Comfort

Wearing respiratory protection can often take some adjustment, but there are many different options out there and with the right respirator selected, comfort and protection are not mutually exclusive. Whether you are considering disposable respirators, reusable (elastomeric) options, powered air purifying respirators (PAPR), or even supplied air (SA), there are many options available, and [consulting with a reputable manufacturer](#) to help you figure out an appropriate choice can be very helpful. Also, there are many [comfort considerations](#) and it helps to think them through with the help of a respiratory protection specialist.

Fit



In the realm of respiratory protection, [fit is a critically important element](#), along with comfort and protection. Without a proper fit, often you cannot achieve the protection you are seeking from using respiratory protection. [Fit testing](#) is very important to a [respiratory protection program](#). Even with the best filtration possible, if a respirator doesn't fit, contaminated air can pass around the respirator and into the wearer's airway.


For wearers, fit includes a proper [seal](#) and comfort. For tight-fitting respirators like full face respirators (FFRs) and elastomerics (reusable respirators) – fit is

the ability to seal to each wearer's face. For all respirators, including loose-fitting respirators such as many PAPRs and SA, fit may impact the wearer's perception of comfort. A respirator that is not the right size may not fit and feel uncomfortable over time. Poor-fitting respirators may cause pressure points or be cumbersome. Remember, fit is individual – no face is the same and you should seek out a manufacturer who is committed to fit and design that takes into consideration all types of shapes and sizes of faces.

Quality

Quality is important when it comes to product selection. Even with the right [fit](#), comfort-level, and protection requirements met, if the [quality](#) of your respirator does not hold up, then it is not a product you should continue to use. Has it been certified by the appropriate regulatory body?

With proper care and maintenance, reusable respirators and PAPRs can last quite a while so it is important to follow all User Instructions for cleaning and inspect your respiratory protection equipment every time before it is used since components erode over time due to use and the environments they are exposed to as part of your job.



Respiratory protection should be designed to help give you peace of mind and confidence in your PPE so that you can perform your job and return to your family safely at the end of the day. When making the choice of what type of respiratory protection to use, look for a manufacturer that offers science-based, innovative solutions. Contact our respiratory protection specialists who are available to share their industry, regulatory, and product knowledge to help you select respiratory options to keep you and your workers protected.