

A Few Quality Considerations When Selecting Respiratory Protection Products

Quality is important when it comes to respiratory protection products. Even with the right [fit](#), [comfort-level](#), certifications, and safety requirements met, if the quality of your respiratory PPE does not meet your expectations, it may not be a product you want to use. It's important to ensure the respirator has been approved by the appropriate testing and certification agency such as the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).



It's important to be aware that there is a [shelf-life](#) limitation on disposable respirators, like the N95 respirators. The [shelf life](#) (when stored per specified storage conditions) is three or five years from the date of manufacture for many of 3M's N95s. Look at the use-by date on the box, which should appear in a MM/YYYY format to establish the shelf life that you should keep these respirators as part of your inventory and/or stockpile. Store respirators in the original packaging, away from contaminated areas, dust, sunlight, extreme temperatures, excessive moisture, and damaging chemicals.

Additionally, to ensure the effectiveness of this type of disposable respirator/filtering facepiece respirator, they should be discarded and replaced whenever one becomes dirty, damaged, or difficult to breathe through.

Did you know that manufacturers of 100 or HEPA class NIOSH approved filters are required to test 100% of the filters they manufacture for reusable, powered and supplied air as well as welding respiratory protection?

Durability

All respirator components do experience wear and tear over time and may degrade over time. But, with proper care and maintenance, reusable respirators as well as powered air purifying respirators (PAPRs) can last quite a while. That is why it is important to perform an inspection of all your respiratory protection products prior to every use. You should also follow all User Instructions for cleaning procedures.

Whether you need [multi-use respiratory protection](#) or a maintenance-free respirator, there are solutions available that are easy to use, clean, and maintain.

Counterfeit Considerations: Making Sure it's Real

Do not assume you can tell how well a respirator works by looking at it, or that a respirator from a manufacturer you don't recognize can be a viable substitute—it may not perform to the same level of fit, comfort and breathability. Do not endanger yourself or others by making the mistake of thinking that fake respirators look fine so they must work the same. Counterfeit respirators are often made by criminals trying to deceive those requiring respirators. These counterfeits do not come from a global manufacturer, like 3M, that is committed to robust quality controls.

Counterfeit respirators are not tested and approved like authentic respirators that have been put through rigorous testing to pass strict regulatory standards in order to achieve approval by these regulatory agencies (like NIOSH). Instead, counterfeit respirators are often produced using unknown processes and materials, with unknown or nonexistent quality controls.

As a result, counterfeit respirators cannot be trusted and should not be purchased or used. To help avoid counterfeit products, [review this list of suggestions and product indications](#).

The best way to avoid counterfeit respirators is to purchase respiratory protection products from a trusted, reputable manufacturer-authorized distributor, or from the manufacturer directly. Do not rely only on authorized distributor certificates, which can be falsified. If you have any questions about whether respirators you've purchased or are thinking about purchasing are authentic, our qualified respiratory specialists are here to help. [Contact us today for assistance with respiratory protection selection](#) and any other questions you have related to purchasing or using [respiratory protection products](#).