

Workplace Health and Safety Bulletin



Guideline for the Development of a Code of Practice for Respiratory Protective Equipment

The Alberta Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Code requires that a Code of Practice describing the selection, maintenance and use of respiratory protective equipment be developed whenever respirators are used at the work site.

This Code of Practice must be in writing and should, at a minimum, contain the following elements:

- Company health and safety policy

The Code of Practice must state whether the use of the respiratory protective equipment is mandatory or not.

- Person responsible for respiratory protective equipment

The employer is responsible for selecting, providing, and maintaining respiratory protective equipment but may designate a competent worker to undertake this responsibility. The Code of Practice must identify the designated person with his/her position and telephone number.

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- Selection of respiratory protective equipment

When selecting the appropriate respiratory protective equipment, the employer must consider the following factors:

- nature of the contaminant,
- concentration or likely concentration of airborne contaminants or biohazardous materials,
- duration or likely duration of worker exposure,
- toxicity of the contaminants,
- concentration of oxygen in the work area,
- warning property of the contaminants,
- need for emergency escape.

The Code of Practice must identify the type of airborne hazard generated by each workplace operation (i.e. dust, mist, fume, vapour, gas, oxygen deficiency, or a combination). Where possible, the specific chemical name of the contaminant(s) or type(s) of biohazardous materials should be identified or the conditions, such as oxygen deficiency, that require respirator use at the work site.

The Code of Practice must state the type of respirator that is to be worn for each operation or task requiring one. If an air purifying respirator is used, the respirator and cartridges' make and model number must also be stated. The selection of respiratory protective equipment must be based on the potential exposure of the worker and the protection factor assigned to the respirator. Additional guidance on the selection of respirators is given in the following publication:

 http://industry.alberta.ca/documents/WHS/WHS-PUB_ppe001.pdf

Respiratory Protective Equipment: An Employer's Guide – PPE001

Respirators must be approved by the U.S. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) or by another standards-setting and equipment-testing organization that is acceptable to Alberta Employment and Immigration.

- Maintenance, cleaning and storage of respiratory protective equipment

A cleaning and maintenance program must be established to ensure that respiratory protective equipment is clean and functions effectively. The Code of Practice must include cartridge and/or filter change out schedules as well as cleaning procedures. This information can be found in the manufacturer's specifications.

When respiratory protective equipment uses compressed breathing air, the employer must ensure that the quality of the breathing air complies with Table 1 of CSA Standard Z180.1-00, *Compressed Breathing Air and Systems* and does not contain concentrations of substances that exceed 10 percent of the applicable Occupational Exposure Limits listed in Table 2 of Schedule 1 of the *OHS Code* (this does not apply to substances listed in Table 1).



http://employment.alberta.ca/documents/WHS/WHS-LEG_ohsc_2009.pdf
Occupational Health and Safety Code - 2009

The employer must ensure that all workers affected by the code of practice are familiar with it before work begins.

- Conditions for use of respiratory protective equipment

An employer must ensure that only workers who are free from any physiological or psychological conditions that would prevent them from being able to wear a respirator are permitted to wear a respirator. The first step is the completion of a health surveillance questionnaire. A sample health surveillance questionnaire can be found in Appendix E of the *Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Standard Z94.4-02, Selection, Use and Care of Respirator*. Privacy of worker's health information must be protected and must be considered by the employer. If workers indicate that they have a health condition on the questionnaire, they should be assessed by a health care professional.

The Code of Practice needs to indicate that health surveillance must be conducted prior to a worker wearing a respirator. Further information can also be found in the following publication:



http://employment.alberta.ca/documents/WHS/WHS-PUB_mg005.pdf
Medical Assessment of Fitness to Wear a Respirator – MG005

Where the effectiveness of the respiratory protective equipment depends on the facial seal, the employer shall ensure that a worker has been properly fit-tested and is clean shaven where the respirator seals against the skin. The Code of Practice should indicate this.

The employer must ensure that workers affected by the Code of Practice have been trained in it before work begins.

The Code of Practice must be readily available at the worksite and should be posted in a location where workers may refer to it.

A sample format for a Respiratory Protective Equipment Code of Practice is provided in Appendix A.

Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) Code of Practice for _____

All workers affected must be trained in this RPE Code of Practice

Company Name _____

A. Person Responsible for Selecting and Providing Respiratory Protective Equipment

Name: _____ Telephone: _____ Position: _____

B. Conditions for Use of RPE:

1. **Health Surveillance:** Workers must be medically fit to wear a respirator. *(A sample respirator user screening form can be found in Appendix E of CSA Standard Z94.4-02)*
2. **Fit-Testing:** RPE that depends on an effective seal for its safe use must be properly fit-tested by a competent (trained) person. *(this must be done every two years or when physical conditions change)*
3. **NIOSH Approval:** RPE required at the worksite must be NIOSH approved *(it will bear a NIOSH approval # e.g. TC- XXXX)*
4. **Clean-Shaven:** Workers must be clean shaven where the respirator contacts the face.

Task (e.g. Spray Painting)	Airborne Hazard (e.g. Type of solvent, dust etc)	Type of Respirator (e.g. half mask)	Respirator Make/Model #	Type of Cartridge (e.g. P100)	Cartridge Make/Model #	RPE Use Mandatory? Y/N

D. Maintenance/Cleaning/Storage of Respiratory Protective Equipment:


Maintenance: Cartridges/filters must be replaced as per the manufacturer's instructions or earlier if smell, taste or irritation from contamination is detected or if there is resistance to breathing. *(see the manufacturer's instructions)*


Cleaning: RPE should be cleaned after each use. Wipes may be used, but should not be the only method of cleaning RPE *(see the manufacturer's instructions)*

Storage: RPE must be stored in a manner that will prevent its contamination *(e.g. sealed bag (Ziploc™))*

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