

**Dust and RPE**

#### **Checks on RPE**

You should check your mask before you put it on and then do a fit check to ensure a proper fit each time.

**Why do I need to wear Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE)?**

RPE is provided to protect your health by preventing you from breathing in hazardous substances such as dust in the workplace air. Breathing in dust can cause serious damage to your lungs and lead to:

* Silicosis:
* Lung cancer.
* Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).
* Asthma

Whilst some lung disease, such as advanced silicosis or asthma, can develop quickly, most of these diseases develop gradually over time as dust builds up in the lungs. By the time symptoms are noticed, irreversible damage may have been caused.

RPE filters the air to remove the harmful substance.

**Requirements for RPE**

RPE will only be provided as a control measure in combination with other controls to reduce your exposure to dust. It must be

* **adequate** & **suitable** for you and the job you will be carrying out – your supervisor must ensure that the correct RPE is selected. In construction a mask type FFP3 with a P3 filter is normally selected
* **compatible** with the other items of PPE that you are wearing.
* **Worn correctly**. Your supervisor should train you on how it should be worn and check that you are wearing it correctly

**What is Face Fit Testing?**

Fit Testing is a way of assessing how well a mask/respirator seals to a face. Everyone’s face is different so one model will never fit all.

* You must have a face fit test for all types of tight fitting RPE, including disposable masks.
* If you wear several different masks, you will need to have a fit test for each one.
* You need to be clean shaven in order to get a good seal between the mask and your face and avoid leaks.
* The test only needs to be completed once, but will need to be repeated if your face changes significantly (e.g. following significant weight gain or loss, or if you undergo substantial dental work or develop scars or moles around the face seal area).

**What Activities produce a lot of Dust?**

Examples include grit blasting, concrete scabbling, cutting or drilling, chasing out mortar before repointing, carpentry, dry sweeping indoors, tunnelling and demolition.

**Existing medical conditions**

Always let your supervisor know if you have any pre-existing medical conditions (e.g. asthma, skin allergies or heart problems) as this may restrict or prevent you from wearing any RPE or certain types.

**Storing your Dust Mask correctly**

* Do not leave your dust mask around the work area during the day as it will fill up with dust and when you put it back on you will be breathing in the dust that has collected in it.
* Throw away a disposable mask at the end of your shift in line with manufacturer’s instructions

**Tool Box Talk Guidance**