

Jason Mechanical Corp

Tool Box Safety Talk

Medical Approval for Respirator Wear

Your ability to wear a respirator depends on many items such as on your physical condition, the type and weight of respirator to be used, and the conditions of use such as: length of time, temperature, humidity, extent of manual labor, and any other additional work stresses. All these factors may place an undue burden on your body that presents an unacceptable health risk.

Prior to respirator selection and fit testing, you must receive medical approval for respirator wear. Only a physician or other licensed health care professional (PLHCP), armed with a copy of the OSHA standards, a clear idea of what types of respirators are to be worn, a knowledge of the atmospheric hazards, working conditions, and your physical condition, can grant this approval.

The final determination of whether a complete medical examination is required rests with the PLHCP. An additional medical evaluation will be made if the PLHCP, the respiratory protection program administrator, or your supervisor request it. Of course, if you experience medical problems or adverse symptoms related to respirator use, a reevaluation will be made.

Lastly, if a change occurs in workplace conditions that may result in a substantial increase in the physiological burden placed on you, a reevaluation may be required.

The above requirements apply to "general" respirator use. If you are working with certain materials such as lead or asbestos, a medical surveillance program will be initiated which requires certain tests be performed as part of a complete physical. These tests also establish a baseline on your blood and/or respiratory system upon which future medical comparisons may be made.

It is not uncommon for a PLHCP to require that an employee use a PAPR (positive air purifying respirator) in lieu of a negative pressure respirator (½-face or full-face) because these respirators do not require any exertion to pull inhaled air through a filtering device.

Do not answer the medical questionnaire dishonestly to avoid a medical examination. If you smoke or have shortness of breath, wheeze, or allergies, say so! Failure to answer the medical questionnaire to the best of your ability does a disservice to the PLHCP, the

company, possibly your fellow workers, and certainly to yourself. The whole point of medical approval for respirator wear is to protect you and to ensure that you are not subjected to a health risk that could lead to disease, or heart or respiratory failure.

Respirators are designed to protect your health from both acute and chronic medical problems. The last thing you would want is to have the item that is designed to protect you actually cause harm. Do not hide information from the PLHCP.

Safety Concerns:
