KENTUCKY
AGC Self Insurers' Fund

Respiratory Protection Readiness

Why it matters Airborne silica, dust, welding fumes, coatings, and other contaminants can damage lungs. Respirators help only when they are correctly selected, fitted, worn, and maintained. Use exposure controls first—respirators are not a substitute for feasible engineering controls.

When Is a Respirator Required?

Situation	What to check	Required action
Concrete cutting, grinding, drilling	Silica rule/Table 1 controls, duration, and exposure	Use specified respirator where Table 1 requires it; otherwise assess exposure and controls.
Welding, coatings, blasting, demolition	Fumes, vapors, particulates, lead/asbestos or other hazards	Assess the contaminant and exposure; follow applicable standards and work plan.
Unknown air, oxygen deficiency, confined space	Possible IDLH atmosphere or low oxygen	STOP. Do not use an air-purifying respirator. Follow entry/air-monitoring and supplied-air requirements.

Important If protection is necessary due to exposure or required by the employer, OSHA requires a written respiratory protection program with an administrator, proper respirator selection, medical evaluations, fit testing where applicable, training, and maintenance.

Fit Test vs. User Seal Check

- **Fit test (formal):** Before first required use of a tight-fitting respirator, at least annually, and when the model/size or facial features change. Use the same make, model, style, and size that will be worn.
- **User seal check (every time):** After donning a tight-fitting respirator, perform the manufacturer-approved seal check (or OSHA Appendix B-1 procedure). Reposition or replace if air leaks. A seal check never replaces a fit test.
- **Protect the face seal:** No facial hair under the sealing surface; glasses, goggles, and other PPE must not break the seal. Verify straps and nosepiece are properly positioned.

Inspect, Clean, Store, and Replace

- **Before each use:** Inspect facepiece, straps, valves, gaskets, filters/cartridges, and connections. Replace damaged or defective components; never improvise repairs.
- **After use:** Clean and disinfect reusable respirators per the manufacturer and OSHA procedures; dry and store away from dust, chemicals, sunlight, moisture, and deformation.
- **Filters and cartridges:** Use the correct NIOSH-approved equipment for the hazard. Replace when damaged, soiled, difficult to breathe through, or at the established change-out interval. Odor is not a reliable change schedule.

Ready-to-Work Check

Before entering the exposure area, confirm: Hazard assessed • Controls in place • Correct respirator/filter • Medical clearance and required fit test current • Training completed • Inspection passed • Seal check passed.

STOP WORK / LEAVE THE AREA If breathing becomes difficult, the respirator leaks or fails, symptoms develop, or the contaminant/conditions change. Move to safe air and notify your supervisor.

OSHA references: 29 CFR 1910.134; 29 CFR 1926.103; 29 CFR 1926.1153 (silica).