

## SELECTION OF A RESPIRATOR FOR COMFORT

### Introduction

A respirator should be selected so it fits as comfortably as possible. No single type or model of respirator will fit everyone, but most manufacturers now have two or three sizes available for each type. Since a comfortable face piece usually also provides the best fit, the respirator user should be allowed to compare the comfort of several different models.

Prior to the selection process, respirator users should be shown how to put on a respirator, how it should be positioned on the face, how to set strap tension, and how to assess a "comfortable respirator".

Several different face pieces and brands of respirators should be available for selection. The array should include a variety of face piece sizes, manufacturers and types (e.g., half- or full-face pieces). Respirators from two manufacturers will usually provide a sufficient variety to fit nearly all RI DEM employees.

The selection process must be conducted in a room separate from the fit test chamber to prevent odor fatigue. A mirror should be available to assist the subject in evaluating the fit and positioning of the respirator.

Assessment of comfort should include the following considerations

- Chin placement
- Positioning of mask on nose
- Strap tension across the nose bridge.
- Room for safety glasses
- Distance from nose to chin.
- Room to talk
- Tendency to slip
- Room for cheeks to fill out

### Respirator Selection Procedure

1. Ensure that there are adequate facilities and time for assessment
2. Spread an array of respirators in front of the test subject.
3. Inform subjects that they are being asked to select the respirator that provides the most comfortable fit. Each respirator represents a different size and shape, and if fit properly, all provide equal protection.
4. The test subject holds each face piece up to the face and eliminates the respirators that are obviously uncomfortable.
5. Once the more comfortable face pieces are identified, the most comfortable mask should be worn for at least 10 minutes to assess comfort. Assistance in assessing comfort can be given. (Subjects who are unfamiliar with respirator use should be directed to don the mask several times and to readjust the straps each time so that they become adept at setting proper tension on the straps.)
6. Test subjects should conduct a negative and positive pressure fit test according to the attached "Functional Fit Test" SOPs. Before conducting the negative or positive pressure test, the subject should be told to "seat" the mask by rapidly moving the head side-to-side and up-and-down and then taking a few deep breaths.
7. The subject is now ready for fit testing, according to the SOPs appended to this "Policy and Program." (See SOP: "Respirator Fit Test Protocol")
8. After passing the fit test, the test subject should be questioned again regarding the comfort of the respirator. If it has become uncomfortable, another model of respirator should be tried.
9. Once a "most comfortable" has been selected, the user should wear that respirator for a minimum of 10 minutes before proceeding with the actual qualitative fit test.