

# COMBAT THE DANGERS WITH A RESPIRATORY PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT PROGRAMME

Implementation of a Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) programme can help to ensure workers are protected from exposure to hazardous substances. To develop an RPE programme, employers must assess the risks, identify the actions and resources required to adequately control them, then put those measures into place and ensure they remain effective. RPE may be one of several controls - ideally the last line of defence after substitution, extraction and other engineering controls.

## KEY STEPS TO IMPLEMENT AN EFFECTIVE RPE PROGRAMME

**1 AVOID THE TASK** >

Think about the risks before work begins. Is the task absolutely necessary?

**2 USE AN ALTERNATIVE** >

If the task must be carried out, is there an alternative material that could be used to reduce or eliminate the respiratory hazard?

**3 USE A DIFFERENT PROCESS** >

If the task cannot be avoided and there is no suitable alternative material, could the material be processed in another way? Could materials be cut or formed prior to being transported on site?

**4 ISOLATE THE HAZARD** >

Identify the location or task where hazardous substances are released into the workplace, this may be a singular location or task or many that could change, and begin planning how to manage the risks.

**5 ENCLOSURE** >

Enclosing the hazard will help to minimise exposure by preventing substances escaping into other areas of the workplace.

**6 SUPPRESSION & EXTRACTION** >

Consider employing equipment to suppress a particulate hazard at source or to extract hazardous gas / vapours from the work area.

**7 ASSESS RESIDUAL RISK** >

Methods of enclosure, extraction, and suppression may not remove all contaminants - it is therefore necessary to assess the amount still present: To assess residual contaminant levels, measurements must be taken using equipment such as personal dosimeters or air sampling pumps. These measurements are used to determine the Required Protection Factor (RPF).

**8 SELECT ADEQUATE RPE** >

Select RPE that will provide adequate protection against the hazard - this involves understanding the concentration of the hazard and the performance of different respirator types. See page 11 for more information on selecting adequate RPE.

**9 SELECT SUITABLE RPE** >

Select RPE that will be suitable for use - this means considering the type of task, work environment, and the wearer. See page 12 for more information on selecting suitable RPE.

**10 TRAIN & MAINTAIN** >

An effective system of maintenance for RPE is essential to ensure the equipment continues to provide the level of protection for which it is designed. Maintenance includes cleaning, examination, replacement, repair, and testing.

Correct maintenance of RPE is essential to ensure the respirator continues to perform and provide the correct protection level. Information on how to maintain RPE can be found in the accompanying user instruction manual and further guidance can be gained from the RPE manufacturer - it is important to check instructions and guidance for each respirator as cleaning, maintenance, and storage requirements can vary for different products. Replacing exhausted or faulty parts and keeping the

equipment clean will help to ensure protection and maximise product life.

Information and training is vital to ensure RPE is used and maintained correctly and safely in the workplace. This includes how to read markings and expiry dates, as well as how to conduct pre-use and fit checks to ensure the respirator is in working order and is donned correctly. For reusable and semi-disposable products, training should also include how often to change filters and how to store and clean the RPE; for powered RPE, battery life and charging should be covered in training as well.

Contact our Sales team on +44 (0)1993 826050 to find out more about how we can help with RPE training.

**JSP TECHNICAL SERVICES**

JSP can provide assistance with selection, use, and maintenance of RPE. Contact our Technical helpline to find out more:

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