How to Properly Care for Your Respirator

**Key Points:**
- Keep your respirator clean and in good operating condition.
- Check for dirt, cracks, tears or other damage before and after each use.
- Disassemble your respirator before cleaning it.
- Store your respirator and cartridges in a cool, dry place away from chemicals and engine exhaust.

**Note to trainer:** Follow this script or use it to help guide you through a 10- to 15-minute tailgate training session for your ag/ hort workers. You may photocopy this sheet for your employees’ personal use. However, it may not be published or sold.

**Why take care of your respirator?**
- Your respirator is an important piece of safety equipment. It helps protect you from breathing in harmful particles, gases and vapors.
- In order to be effective each time you use it, your respirator must be in good condition.

**How to inspect your respirator**
- Some respirators are disposable and can be thrown away after they are worn.
- Non-disposable respirators should be checked before and after each use. Here’s how to do that:

**Note to trainer:** Demonstrate each of the following steps to trainees.

1. Stretch the elastic on the straps. Be sure the elastic isn’t becoming loose. Also check the straps for tears.
2. Check the lens for cracks or other damage.
3. Inspect the face seal. Make sure nothing interferes with the fittings. Check for dirt, cracks or tears.
4. When you perform fit checks on your respirator, you will be able to tell if the valves are working properly.
5. Look for any other worn, damaged or missing parts. If you spot a problem, get a different respirator. Report the problem to your supervisor so the respirator can be repaired.

**Warning:** Cartridges can break down and become ineffective with use. Leave the contaminated area you are in and change cartridges when you detect any tastes, odors or irritation, or your senses indicate any abnormal condition.

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**Cleaning your respirator**

- Follow these steps to **clean** your non-disposable **respirator**:
  1. Wash your hands.
  2. Disassemble your **respirator** before cleaning it. Check the written instructions that come with the **respirator**.
  3. Hand wash the facepiece in warm water. Use a disinfecting soap recommended by the manufacturer. Then thoroughly rinse it off.
  4. Clean the inhalation and exhalation valves with the disinfecting soap.
  5. Cartridges and filters cannot be cleaned. They may be reused or disposed of, depending on their condition.
  6. Let all of the parts you have cleaned air dry before you put the respirator back together.

- You can use disposable wipe pads that do not contain alcohol to wipe off your respirator in between uses during the workday. The wipe pads come in small packets and can be taken with you where you work.

**Where to store your respirator**

- Storing a **respirator** on the dashboard of a truck, in an enclosed cab, on a work bench or near pesticide containers is dangerous. Cartridges can absorb anything from cigarette smoke to engine exhaust, and may not work the next time around.
- Dust, sunlight, humidity, extreme heat, extreme cold and chemicals may all damage your **respirator**.
- Be sure to **store** your **respirator** in a cool, dry place out of the sunlight.
- Cartridges should be removed from the **respirator** and stored in a standard zipper lock plastic bag.

*Note to trainer: Tell trainees where to **store** their **respirators**.*

- **Reminder:** Do not put anything on top of the **respirator** when you **store** it.

**Are there any questions?**

*Note to trainer: Take time to answer trainees’ questions. Then review the **Proper Respirator Care Do’s and Don’ts**.*

### **PROPER RESPIRATOR CARE DO’S AND DON’TS**

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<tr>
<th><strong>DO:</strong></th>
<th><strong>DON’T:</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Take good care of your <strong>respirator</strong> by knowing how to inspect and <strong>clean</strong> it.</td>
<td>Handle your <strong>respirator</strong> with dirty hands.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use a different <strong>respirator</strong> if you spot any worn, damaged or missing parts.</td>
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See our **full line of safety supplies**, including respirators, eye and ear protection, coveralls, first aid and more.