



### **Why use respirators?**

Properly fitted and used respirators protect you against hazardous atmospheres containing particulates / dusts (e.g., silica), vapors and gases (e.g., carbon monoxide), Immediately Dangerous to Life or Health (IDLH) atmospheres (e.g., oxygen deficiency), physical agents (e.g., radioactive particles), or biological agents (e.g., mold spores).

### **When are respirators required?**

Exposure to any material or substance at a concentration above the permissible exposure limit (PEL) must be avoided. Compliance must be achieved by using administrative (i.e., employee shift changes) or engineering (i.e., ventilation) controls first. When these controls are not feasible to achieve full compliance, protective equipment must be used to keep the exposure within the PELs prescribed.

### **OSHA's Respiratory Protection Standard**

OSHA's Respiratory Protection Standard is in place to ensure that employees are protected from hazardous atmospheres containing particulates / dusts, vapors and gases, Immediately Dangerous to Life or Health (IDLH) atmospheres, physical agents or biological agents.

The standard reflects current respirator technology and better ways to ensure the appropriate respirator properly fits the worker and the task. It is estimated that OSHA's Respiratory Protection Standard will prevent more than 4,000 injuries and illnesses nationally each year.

The standard requires that employers:

- Create and maintain a written plan with worksite-specific procedures that tailor the employer's program to each worksite.
- Conduct hazard evaluation(s) to identify and characterize respiratory hazards and conditions of work to assist employers in selecting appropriate respirators.
- Provide workers with medical evaluations to determine ability of workers to wear the respirator selected.
- Ensure fit testing of tight-fitting respirators to reduce face seal leakage and ensure that the respirators provide adequate protection for the worker.
- Conduct a training program / refreshers to ensure that employees use respirators safely.
- Conduct periodic program evaluations to ensure that respirator use continues to be effective.