

Voluntary Use of Respirators

Employers are required to determine their employees' exposure levels to airborne contaminants present in their work environment whenever it is reasonable to suspect that those exposures may be harmful.

"Harmful"

Exposure to dusts, fumes, mists, vapors, or gases that are either:

- In excess of the permissible limits prescribed by Title 8 California Code of Regulations (T8CCR) [section 5155](#).
- Of such a nature by inhalation as to result in, or have a probability to result in, injury, illness, disease, impairment, or loss of function.

The airborne contaminant permissible exposure concentration limits prescribed by section 5155 are intended to prevent adverse health effects to most workers exposed daily, during a 40-hour workweek, for a working lifetime. Due to variations in individual susceptibility, some workers may suffer discomfort, aggravation of a pre-existing condition, or occupational disease when exposed to concentrations below these prescribed values.

When Respiratory Protection is Not Required

An employer may provide respirators at the request of employees, or permit employees to use their own respirators, on a voluntary basis if the employer first determines that:

1. Their employees are not experiencing harmful airborne exposures.
2. Such respirator use will not in itself create a hazard (e.g., heat stress).

Wildfire Smoke

When required by [section 5141.1](#):

- Respirators must be provided to employees for voluntary use.
- Employees must be trained on their proper use, regardless of whether employees use them.

Requirements for Voluntary Respirator Use

Employers must:

1. Include employees voluntarily wearing respirators in a written, effectively implemented respirator protection program that addresses the following:
 - a. Medical approval of employees to wear respirators. Refer to [section 5144\(e\)](#) for the details on the medical evaluation requirements, including both:
 - i. Using a physician or other licensed health care professional (PLHCP) to perform medical evaluations, or administer questionnaires, that obtain the information in Part A of [Appendix C](#), sections 1 and 2.
 - ii. Follow-up medical evaluations as needed.
 - b. Respirator cleaning, inspection, storage, and maintenance that meets [section 5144\(h\)](#) requirements so that the respirator does not present a health hazard to the user.

Filtering Facepiece Respirators ("Dust Masks")

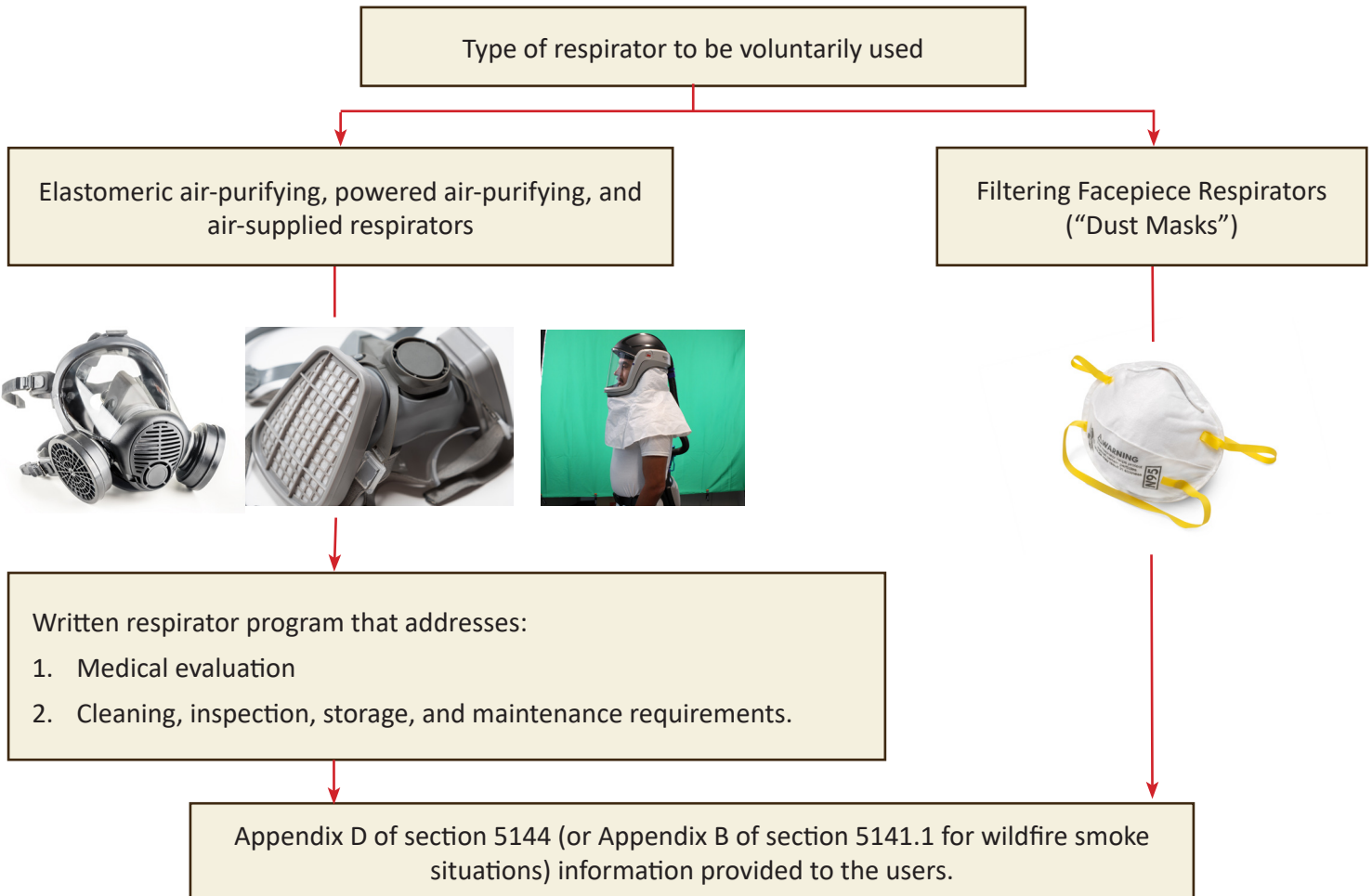
- Employees voluntarily using "dust masks" do not have to be included in this program.
- Employees must always understand proper respirator use and limitations. Only NIOSH-approved respirators, including dust masks, should be worn.

2. Provide their employees with the following:
 - a. For general use applications, the information contained in [Appendix D](#) of section 5144.
 - b. For wildfire smoke applications, the information contained in [Appendix B](#) of section 5141.1.

Voluntary Respirator Use—Summary

Follow this flow chart if you have determined that both:

1. Your employees are not exposed to harmful levels of airborne contaminants.
2. The use of respirators does not create a hazard.



Additional Resources

Cal/OSHA

- [Respirator Protection Fact Sheet](#)
- [Respirator Protection in the Workplace - a Guide for Employers](#)
- [Sample Respiratory Protection Program](#)
- [Worker Safety & Health in Wildfire Regions](#)

Federal OSHA

- [Respiratory Protection eTool](#)
- NIOSH**
- [Workplace Safety & Health Topics - Respiratory Protection](#)

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This document is available with active links at www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/dosh_publications
For assistance regarding this subject matter, employers may contact
Cal/OSHA Consultation Services at 1-800-963-9424 or InfoCons@dir.ca.gov
www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/consultation.html

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