

AGRICULTURAL SAFETY TOPICS

PROPERLY CLEANING & STORING RESPIRATORS

Objective:

To be able to clean and store respirators according to the presented guidelines.

Background:

Common mistakes that limit the effectiveness of respirators.

1. Upon returning from the field on a hot and humid day, a worker haphazardly removes the personal protective clothing. The worker pulls off the respirator and hangs it on a nail in the barn, next to a pesticide container.
2. Rather than taking the time to put the respirator away, a worker tosses it on the dashboard of the truck. The truck is parked in a very sunny spot.
3. A respirator is in an enclosed cab. The cartridge is inside the sleeve of a plastic glove. The respirator has been there for two months.

Respirators, a piece of personal protective equipment (PPE), should be stored away from dust, sunlight, heat, extreme cold, excessive moisture and damaging chemicals. Respirators must be stored away from personal clothing and pesticide-contaminated areas.



Dust Filter Mask: traps particles out of the air



Cartidge Respirator: uses an absorbent material plus dust filters to purify the air.

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Clean a dual cartridge using the following procedures:

- Following the manufacturer’s instructions, wash reusable respirator face pieces.
- The face pieces should be cleaned with disinfecting soap, thoroughly rinsed and dried.
- Dispose of cartridges and prefilters (they cannot be cleaned) when you smell or taste contaminants, or if your eyes, nose, or throat become irritated. They must also be replaced if they show any sign of damage.
- Disassemble the respirator, following the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Inspect the parts and replace damaged or worn parts.
- Wash hands before and after cleaning.
- Clean the inhalation and exhalation valves in a mild soap. Do not damage or distort the valves during cleaning.
- Air dry the parts that have been cleaned. They must be completely dry before they can be reassembled.
- After reassembling, check seals and gaskets for tightness and leaks.

**Respirators should be cleaned after each use, except disposable respirators. Non-alcohol wipe pads can be used to supplement cleaning during intermittent use.

Storing Respirators:

Clean respirators should be stored in nonporous, sturdy, airtight containers (such as a “Ziploc” plastic bag). To avoid collecting dust, the respirator should be put away as soon as it is dry. Respirator face pieces and valves should be stored in a manner that does not distort the shape. Keep the respirator in a cool, dry cabinet specifically designated for storage.

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Review The Following Points:

- Clean respirators after each use.
- Cartridges and prefilters should be disposed after they are “used up” and cannot be cleaned.
- After cleaning, store respirators in a cool, dry place.

Based upon: Ohio State University Extension. *Storing Respirators*. Retrieved from website <http://ohioline.osu.edu/atts/modules.html>

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