

NERC Guidance on Fit-testing of Respiratory Protection

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NERC uses respiratory protection in a variety of situations. This guidance identifies the circumstances where fit-testing is required. Fit testing means testing the adequacy of protection afforded by the respiratory protection related to the fit of the device to the wearer's face. It is generally advisable that where respiratory protection is required, respirators that do not require fit testing should be used, however, where respirators that do require fit testing are used the following guidance should be followed.

Nuisance dusts:

- Simple face masks are used regularly in NERC
- These should only be used for 'nuisance dusts' where the only adverse effect is discomfort from the dustiness per se
- They should not be used for dusts where adverse health effects might ensue
- When simple paper/fabric masks are used in these circumstances, no fit-testing is required

Dusts likely to lead to adverse health effects or Fume/vapour exposure:

- Purpose-designed respirators are required for all dusts/fume/vapours likely to lead to adverse health effects as identified in the COSHH risk assessment procedure.
- These should be of appropriate design for the specific risk identified
- Regular fit-testing is required. Please refer to HSE Information Document HSE 282/28.
- Fit-testing is essentially impossible for such close-fitting devices if the wearer is bearded
- If fit-testing is impossible because of facial hair or other physical reasons or if multiple wearers make fit-testing unworkable, the alternative is full helmets with built-in filtered air supplies. The latter are fitted with elasticated collars at the neck
- Helmets must be regularly serviced and filters replaced at intervals determined by the manufacturer's recommendation/specific risk assessment.
- HSE Information Document HSE 282/28 also gives information on the competency required to do fit testing