

SPOTLIGHT ON SAFETY

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FILTERING FACE PIECE RESPIRATORS



Many UCR labs and work areas use dust masks. EH&S wants to make sure that the user of a dust mask knows the limitations of the protection. The voluntary use of dust masks at UCR is allowed only in **atmospheres that are not hazardous**. The Principal Investigators (PI) and Supervisors should know why their employees are using dust masks and determine if the use is effective or creating a hazard. If you use a dust mask, and it is not required by Cal/OSHA, your PI or Supervisor should provide you with the information in [T8 CCR, Section 5144, Appendix D](#). Below are some points to consider when using dust masks.

Use Dust Masks the Right Way!

- Dust masks can only protect against nuisance particles and non-hazardous dusts such as silica, pollen, and other larger dust particles
- Select a mask that properly fits you - there are a number of models and sizes of NIOSH-certified masks to choose from
- Most dust mask have one elastic band that goes above the ears and one below, as in the picture above - read the manufacturer's instructions before use
- Inspect the dust mask before every use - check that all straps are intact, that the inside of the mask is not contaminated, and that the mask is not damaged in a way that would compromise its effectiveness
- Store dust mask in an air-tight bag to keep it clean and dry for future use

Improper Use of Dust Masks

- Dust masks do not protect against aerosols, gases, vapors, paint spray, asbestos, and very fine dusts
- Using a dust mask instead of using a fume hood can expose you to hazardous fumes and vapors
- Do not share your dust mask with other employees
- Do not use a dust mask for protection when the atmosphere is unknown

Limitations

- The filtering material will eventually become loaded with particles and filtered air will not get through - make sure to follow the manufacturer's recommendations for the length of use
- The dust mask can become a hazard to the user if it is used improperly or if it has been damaged