

VOLUNTARY USE OF RESPIRATORS

1. **Do I have to provide respirators to employees? Can I refuse an employees' request to wear a respirator?**

If you are not required to provide a respirator because of a standard, the workers can voluntarily use a respirator as long as you determine that the use of a respirator will not create a hazard. If these elements are satisfied, then employees may **voluntarily** use the facepiece-type respirators (dust masks). Employers must provide the employees with the information in Title 8, CCR, §5144, **Appendix D (Mandatory) Information for Employees Using Respirators When Not Required Under the Standard**. [Link]

Cal/OSHA notes that surgical and other non-respirator face masks do not protect persons from airborne infectious disease and cannot be relied upon for novel pathogens. They do not prevent inhalation of virus particles because they do not seal to the person's face and are not tested to filtration efficiencies of respirators.

2. **Can I refuse an employees' request to wear a respirator?**

Maybe. This turns on the "voluntary" use of respirators discussed above. If the respirator creates a hazard then you can tell employees not to wear the "facepiece type respirators (dust masks). Cal/OSHA notes that surgical and other non-respirator face masks do not protect persons from airborne infectious disease and cannot be relied upon for novel pathogens. They do not prevent inhalation of virus particles because they do not seal to the person's face and are not tested to filtration efficiencies of respirators. Further, the CDC says you do not need to wear a facemask unless you are caring for someone who is sick (and they are not able to wear a facemask). Facemasks may be in short supply and they should be saved for caregivers and others who need them. This could create a gray area and we would need a full understanding to give advice in this area.