

Face Shields and Respirators: When Protection Interferes

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Why this matters

A face shield can contact a respirator or displace eyewear when the worker turns or bends. Study the actual combination before exposure, especially after changing a component.

Objective: Verify that the selected shield, eyewear and respirator work together without disrupting required protection.

Key hazards or failure points

Shield contacting a respirator; displaced eyewear; fogging; obscured view; damaged attachments; disturbed facepiece seals.

Practical controls

- Use the respiratory program and task assessment to select compatible respirator, shield and primary eye protection; consult actual product instructions.
- Resolve interference through approved selection or work-method changes. Do not lift required protection, break the respirator seal or improvise attachments.
- Keep engineering controls effective. Have the respiratory-program administrator resolve compatibility or fit concerns before the combination is used.

Verify It in the Field

The lead and wearer identify actual equipment models and compare the complete configuration with program selection and manufacturer instructions.

In a safe area, don the complete set and use normal task head movements; study shield contact, displacement and the sightline.

For a tight-fitting respirator, the wearer performs the prescribed user seal check. Confirm required fit-testing arrangements separately; peer observation cannot replace them.

Stop and reassess

Leave exposure safely for shifting protection, obscured vision or seal leakage. Hold the task until the combination is corrected and rechecked; do not remove a required component to continue.

Ask the crew

1. Could the shield touch the respirator during this task?
2. What changes when we look down?
3. Who resolves an incompatible combination?

Use this HOP tool — Peer checking: In a safe area, the wearer and a familiar coworker identify the planned shield and respirator combination. Agree the approved donning sequence, then observe normal task movements for contact or displacement. Record a concern and resolve it through the program before exposure.

Sources: OSHA 1926.102; OSHA 1926.95(c); OSHA 1910.134(g)(1); DOE Vol. 2, pp. 41–43. HOP concepts adapted from DOE-HDBK-1028-2009, Vol. 2 (June 2009). No claim to original U.S. Government work; no government endorsement implied.

Free next step: JHA/JSA planning and field-verification worksheet

Expanded guidance and separate forms: toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/face-shield-respirator-interference