Environment, Health & Safety
FACILITIES PLANNING & MANAGEMENT
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

Voluntary Respirator Use for Reproductive Health Considerations

When employees are pregnant or trying to become pregnant, minimizing exposure to certain substances is often recommended. Respirators may be worn **voluntarily for added protection**, even when not required.

Because respirator use is voluntary and exposures are below established safety limits, cartridges do not need to be replaced as often as they would in a required-use program. While determining an exact replacement schedule for organic vapor (anesthetic gas) or formaldehyde cartridges can be challenging, replacement intervals may be adjusted based on use patterns and exposure conditions.

For more information take the EH&S Reproductive Hazards in Research training. If a medical condition affects your ability to work, contact your Divisional Disability Representative (DDR).

Recommended Respirator Cartridge Guidelines:

- **Wait to open cartridges** until you need them. Mark the open date to track usage time.
- **Store cartridges properly** between uses in a sealed bag or container.
- **Replace cartridges immediately** after any incident that may have increased exposure—such as a spill, loose-fitting nose cone, disconnection of tubing, or other equipment failure.
- **Assess your task hazards:** If there is a risk of exposure to infectious agents or biohazards, add a particulate filter (N95 or P100) to the chemical cartridge.
- **Adjust the cartridge schedule for voluntary use:**
  - For long, infrequent shifts (e.g., 4-6 hours once a month), changing cartridges after each use may be appropriate.
  - For short, frequent shifts (e.g., 1 hour daily for a week), a weekly change-out may be sufficient.
- **Respond to breakthrough signs:** If you notice odors or other signs of cartridge failure while wearing the respirator, replace the cartridge and shorten your change-out schedule.

Respirator Cartridge Summary

Hazard	Cartridge	Change Schedule
Anesthetic gas (ex. Isoflurane, sevoflurane)	**3M 6001** Organic Vapor (OV; black band, white text)	Daily to monthly depending on use and comfort level
Anesthetic gas and infectious agent	**3M 60921** OV/P100 (black band, white text and pink top) **OR** add a **N95 filter (5N11)** to the 6001 cartridge using a **3M 501** Filter Retainer	
Formaldehyde/formalin	**3M 6005** Formaldehyde and Organic Vapor (FM/OV; black band, olive green text)	Daily* to monthly depending on use and comfort level
Formaldehyde/formalin and infectious agent	**3M 60925** FM/OV/P100 (black band, olive green text and pink top) **OR** add a **N95 filter (5N11)** to the 6005 cartridge using a **3M 501** Filter Retainer	

* OSHA requires daily change out of formaldehyde cartridges when concentrations exceed the OSHA exposure limits