



## RESPIRATOR FIT-TESTING

This display highlights the components needed & steps to perform to fit-test farmers with the respirators they are using for protection.

### What kinds of stories would make you think about this resource?

- Farmers applying pesticides are required to follow labels that specify respirator use.
- Farmers can reduce allergic reactions (farmer's lung / hypersensitivity pneumonitis) by wearing a dust-filtering respirator that is sized correctly to fit the wearer.
- Avian influenza: preventing exposure transmission

### What is the risk to Ag Workers?

A respirator may be required (by pesticide manufacturer) or recommended to reduce exposures to inhalation hazards on the farm. Selecting both the right TYPE of respirator and filter along with using one that FITS correctly are needed to make sure the respirator can perform the intended task of protecting the wearer.

The Worker Protection Standard (for pesticide applicators) requires a full respiratory protection program be adopted, which includes selecting a respirator that FITS.

This fit-testing station will highlight the steps needed to assess the fit. If the respirator does not fit, the wearer is not protected from the hazards that they think they are safe from, which can lead to adverse health outcomes that are associated with the hazardous compounds in the air.



### Are there recent news stories on respirator hazards?

- May 2025 (BBC): [How dangerous dust is putting farm workers' lives at risk](#) (farmer's lung)
- Dec. 2024 (NPR): [Bird flu Q&A: What to know to help protect yourself and your pets](#)
- Jun. 2024 (STAT): [Getting farmworkers to use PPE is hard, but it's the best way to stop an H5N1 bird flu epidemic](#)

### How do we approach the question of respiratory protection in an ag story?

If there are recommendations to wear respiratory protection, make sure to recommend the correct filter type (general guidance [here](#)) and make sure to recommend that farmers check the fit of the respirator using fit testing resources.

Note: in Iowa, we are training extension offices to be able to do this. Persons in Cerro Gordo, Dubuque, Franklin, Hardin, Palo Alto, and Warren counties have been trained to date.

### If you are on a farm, how do you protect yourself from this hazard?

You should not be in environments where others are wearing a respirator and you are not. If it is "dusty", you are recommended to wear an N95 as a precaution or move to an area that is not dusty.