

OSHA-accepted fit test methods

General Requirements - The employer shall conduct fit testing using the following procedures.

1. The test subject shall be allowed to pick the most acceptable respirator from a sufficient number of respirator models and sizes so that the respirator is acceptable to, and correctly fits, the user.
2. Prior to the selection process, the test subject shall be shown how to put on a respirator, how it should be positioned on the face, how to set strap tension and how to determine an acceptable fit. A mirror shall be available to assist the subject in evaluating the fit and positioning of the respirator. This instruction may not constitute the subject's formal training on respirator use, because it is only a review.
3. The test subject shall be informed that he/she is being asked to select the respirator that provides the most acceptable fit. Each respirator represents a different size and shape, and if fitted and used properly, will provide adequate protection.
4. The test subject shall be instructed to hold each chosen facepiece up to the face and eliminate those that obviously do not give an acceptable fit.
5. The more acceptable facepieces are noted in case the one selected proves unacceptable; the most comfortable mask is donned and worn at least five minutes to assess comfort. Assistance in assessing comfort can be given by discussing the points in the following item A.6. If the test subject is not familiar with using a particular respirator, the test subject shall be directed to don the mask several times and to adjust the straps each time to become adept at setting proper tension on the straps.
6. Assessment of comfort shall include a review of the following points with the test subject and allowing the test subject adequate time to determine the comfort of the respirator.
 - a. Position of the mask on the nose
 - b. Room for eye protection
 - c. Room to talk
 - d. Position of mask on face and cheeks
7. The following criteria shall be used to help determine the adequacy of the respirator fit:
 - a. Chin properly placed;
 - b. Adequate strap tension, not overly tightened;
 - c. Fit across nose bridge;
 - d. Respirator of proper size to span distance from nose to chin;
 - e. Tendency of respirator to slip;
 - f. Self-observation in mirror to evaluate fit and respirator position.
8. The test subject shall conduct a user seal check, either the negative and positive pressure seal checks described in [Appendix B-1](#) or those recommended by the respirator manufacturer which provide equivalent protection to the procedures in [Appendix B-1](#). Before conducting the negative and positive pressure checks, the subject shall be told to seat the mask on the face by moving the head from side-to-side and up and down slowly while taking in a few slow deep

breaths. Another facepiece shall be selected and retested if the test subject fails the user seal check tests.

9. The test shall not be conducted if there is any hair growth between the skin and the facepiece sealing surface, such as stubble beard growth, beard, mustache or sideburns which cross the respirator sealing surface. Any type of apparel which interferes with a satisfactory fit shall be altered or removed.
10. If a test subject exhibits difficulty in breathing during the tests, she or he shall be referred to a physician or other licensed health care professional, as appropriate, to determine whether the test subject can wear a respirator while performing her or his duties.
11. If the employee finds the fit of the respirator unacceptable, the test subject shall be given the opportunity to select a different respirator and to be retested.
12. Exercise regimen. Prior to the commencement of the fit test, the test subject shall be given a description of the fit test and the test subject's responsibilities during the test procedure. The description of the process shall include a description of the test exercises that the subject will be performing. The respirator to be tested shall be worn for at least 5 minutes before the start of the fit test.
13. The fit test shall be performed while the test subject is wearing any applicable safety equipment that may be worn during actual respirator use which would interfere with respirator fit.
14. Test Exercises
 - a. Employees must perform the following test exercises for all fit testing methods prescribed in this appendix. Employers must ensure that employees perform the test exercises in the appropriate test environment in the following manner.
 1. Normal breathing. In a normal standing position, without talking, the subject shall breathe normally.
 2. Deep breathing. In a normal standing position, the subject shall breathe slowly and deeply, taking caution so as not to hyperventilate.
 3. Turning head side to side. Standing in place, the subject shall slowly turn his/her head from side to side between the extreme positions on each side. The head shall be held at each extreme momentarily so the subject can inhale at each side.
 4. Moving head up and down. Standing in place, the subject shall slowly move his/her head up and down. The subject shall be instructed to inhale in the up position (i.e., when looking toward the ceiling).
 5. Talking. The subject shall talk out loud slowly and loud enough so as to be heard clearly by the test conductor. The subject can read from a prepared text such as the Rainbow Passage, count backward from 100, or recite a memorized poem or song.

Rainbow Passage

When the sunlight strikes raindrops in the air, they act like a prism and form a rainbow. The rainbow is a division of white light into many beautiful colors. These take the shape of a long round arch, with its path high above, and its two ends apparently beyond the horizon. There is, according to legend, a boiling pot of gold

at one end. People look, but no one ever finds it. When a man looks for something beyond reach, his friends say he is looking for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

6. Grimace. The test subject shall grimace by smiling or frowning.
 7. Bending over. The test subject shall bend at the waist as if he/she were to touch his/her toes. Jogging in place shall be substituted for this exercise in those test environments such as shroud type QNFT or QLFT units that do not permit bending over at the waist.
 8. Normal breathing. Same as exercise (1).
- b. Each test exercise shall be performed for one minute except for the grimace exercise which shall be performed for 15 seconds. The test subject shall be questioned by the test conductor regarding the comfort of the respirator upon completion of the protocol. If it has become unacceptable, another model of respirator shall be tried. The respirator shall not be adjusted once the fit test exercises begin. Any adjustment voids the test, and the fit test must be repeated.

Qualitative Fit Test (QLFT) Protocols

The employer shall ensure that persons administering QLFT are able to prepare test solutions, calibrate equipment and perform tests properly, recognize invalid tests, and ensure that test equipment is in proper working order. The employer shall ensure that QLFT equipment is kept clean and well maintained so as to operate within the parameters for which it was designed. Two OSHA-accepted tests are described on the following pages, and are to be performed by EH&S personnel.

Isoamyl Acetate Protocol

Note: This protocol is not appropriate to use for the fit testing of particulate respirators. If used to fit test particulate respirators, the respirator must be equipped with an organic vapor filter.

- (A) Odor Threshold Screening. Odor threshold screening, performed without wearing a respirator, is intended to determine if the individual tested can detect the odor of isoamyl acetate at low levels.
1. Three 1 liter glass jars with metal lids are required.
 2. Odor-free water (e.g., distilled or spring water) at approximately 25 deg. C (77 deg. F) shall be used for the solutions.
 3. The isoamyl acetate (IAA) (also known as isopentyl acetate) stock solution is prepared by adding 1 ml of pure IAA to 800 ml of odor-free water in a 1 liter jar, closing the lid and shaking for 30 seconds. A new solution shall be prepared at least weekly.
 4. The screening test shall be conducted in a room separate from the room used for actual fit testing. The two rooms shall be well-ventilated to prevent the odor of IAA from becoming evident in the general room air where testing takes place.
 5. The odor test solution is prepared in a second jar by placing 0.4 ml of the stock solution into 500 ml of odor-free water using a clean dropper or pipette. The solution shall be shaken for 30 seconds and allowed to stand for two to three minutes so that the IAA concentration above the liquid may reach equilibrium. This solution shall be used for only one day.
 6. A test blank shall be prepared in a third jar by adding 500 cc of odor-free water.
 7. The odor test and test blank jar lids shall be labeled (e.g., 1 and 2) for jar identification. Labels shall be placed on the lids so that they can be peeled off periodically and switched to maintain the integrity of the test.
 8. The following instruction shall be typed on a card and placed on the table in front of the two test jars (i.e., 1 and 2): “The purpose of this test is to determine if you can smell banana oil at a low concentration. The two bottles in front of you contain water. One of these bottles also contains a small amount of banana oil. Be sure the covers are on tight, then shake each bottle for two seconds. Unscrew the lid of each bottle, one at a time, and sniff at the mouth of the bottle. Indicate to the test conductor which bottle contains banana oil.”
 9. The mixtures used in the IAA odor detection test shall be prepared in an area separate from where the test is performed, in order to prevent olfactory fatigue in the subject.
 10. If the test subject is unable to correctly identify the jar containing the odor test solution, the IAA qualitative fit test shall not be performed.
 11. If the test subject correctly identifies the jar containing the odor test solution, the test subject may proceed to respirator selection and fit testing.

(B) Isoamyl Acetate Fit Test

1. The fit test chamber shall be a clear 55-gallon drum liner suspended inverted over a 2-foot diameter frame so that the top of the chamber is about 6 inches above the test subject's head. If no drum liner is available, a similar chamber shall be constructed using plastic sheeting. The inside top center of the chamber shall have a small hook attached.
2. Each respirator used for the fitting and fit testing shall be equipped with organic vapor cartridges or offer protection against organic vapors.
3. After selecting, donning, and properly adjusting a respirator, the test subject shall wear it to the fit testing room. This room shall be separate from the room used for odor threshold screening and respirator selection, and shall be well-ventilated, as by an exhaust fan or lab hood, to prevent general room contamination.
4. A copy of the test exercises and any prepared text from which the subject is to read shall be taped to the inside of the test chamber.
5. Upon entering the test chamber, the test subject shall be given a 6-inch by 5-inch piece of paper towel, or other porous, absorbent, single-ply material, folded in half and wetted with 0.75 ml of pure IAA. The test subject shall hang the wet towel on the hook at the top of the chamber. An IAA test swab or ampule may be substituted for the IAA wetted paper towel provided it has been demonstrated that the alternative IAA source will generate an IAA test atmosphere with a concentration equivalent to that generated by the paper towel method.
6. Allow two minutes for the IAA test concentration to stabilize before starting the fit test exercises. This would be an appropriate time to talk with the test subject; to explain the fit test, the importance of his/her cooperation, and the purpose for the test exercises; or to demonstrate some of the exercises.
7. If at any time during the test, the subject detects the banana-like odor of IAA, the test is failed. The subject shall quickly exit from the test chamber and leave the test area to avoid olfactory fatigue.
8. If the test is failed, the subject shall return to the selection room and remove the respirator. The test subject shall repeat the odor sensitivity test, select and put on another respirator, return to the test area and again begin the fit test procedure described in (1) through (7) above. The process continues until a respirator that fits well has been found. Should the odor sensitivity test be failed, the subject shall wait at least 5 minutes before retesting. Odor sensitivity will usually have returned by this time.
9. If the subject passes the test, the efficiency of the test procedure shall be demonstrated by having the subject break the respirator face seal and take a breath before exiting the chamber.
10. When the test subject leaves the chamber, the subject shall remove the saturated towel and return it to the person conducting the test, so that there is no significant IAA concentration buildup in the chamber during subsequent tests. The used towels shall be kept in a self-sealing plastic bag to keep the test area from being contaminated.

Bitrex™ (Denatonium Benzoate) Solution Aerosol Qualitative Fit Test

The Bitrex™ (Denatonium benzoate) solution aerosol QLFT protocol uses the published saccharin test protocol because that protocol is widely accepted. Bitrex is routinely used as a taste aversion agent in household liquids which children should not be drinking and is endorsed by the American Medical Association, the National Safety Council, and the American Association of Poison Control Centers. The entire screening and testing procedure shall be explained to the test subject prior to the conduct of the screening test.

- (A) Taste Threshold Screening. The Bitrex taste threshold screening, performed without wearing a respirator, is intended to determine whether the individual being tested can detect the taste of Bitrex.
1. During threshold screening as well as during fit testing, subjects shall wear an enclosure about the head and shoulders that is approximately 12 inches (30.5 cm) in diameter by 14 inches (35.6 cm) tall. The front portion of the enclosure shall be clear from the respirator and allow free movement of the head when a respirator is worn. An enclosure substantially similar to the 3M hood assembly, parts #14 and #15 combined, is adequate.
 2. The test enclosure shall have a 3/4 inch (1.9 cm) hole in front of the test subject's nose and mouth area to accommodate the nebulizer nozzle.
 3. The test subject shall don the test enclosure. Throughout the threshold screening test, the test subject shall breathe through his or her slightly open mouth with tongue extended. The subject is instructed to report when he/she detects a bitter taste.
 4. Using a DeVilbiss Model 40 Inhalation Medication Nebulizer or equivalent, the test conductor shall spray the Threshold Check Solution into the enclosure. This Nebulizer shall be clearly marked to distinguish it from the fit test solution nebulizer.
 5. The Threshold Check Solution is prepared by adding 13.5 milligrams of Bitrex to 100 ml of 5% salt (NaCl) solution in distilled water.
 6. To produce the aerosol, the nebulizer bulb is firmly squeezed so that the bulb collapses completely, and is then released and allowed to fully expand.
 7. An initial ten squeezes are repeated rapidly and then the test subject is asked whether the Bitrex can be tasted. If the test subject reports tasting the bitter taste during the ten squeezes, the screening test is completed. The taste threshold is noted as ten regardless of the number of squeezes actually completed.
 8. If the first response is negative, ten more squeezes are repeated rapidly and the test subject is again asked whether the Bitrex is tasted. If the test subject reports tasting the bitter taste during the second ten squeezes, the screening test is completed. The taste threshold is noted as twenty regardless of the number of squeezes actually completed.
 9. If the second response is negative, ten more squeezes are repeated rapidly and the test subject is again asked whether the Bitrex is tasted. If the test subject reports tasting the bitter taste during the third set of ten squeezes, the screening test is completed. The taste threshold is noted as thirty regardless of the number of squeezes actually completed.

10. The test conductor will take note of the number of squeezes required to solicit a taste response.
 11. If the Bitrex is not tasted after 30 squeezes (step 10), the test subject is unable to taste Bitrex and may not perform the Bitrex fit test.
 12. If a taste response is elicited, the test subject shall be asked to take note of the taste for reference in the fit test.
 13. Correct use of the nebulizer means that approximately 1 ml of liquid is used at a time in the nebulizer body.
 14. The nebulizer shall be thoroughly rinsed in water, shaken to dry, and refilled at least each morning and afternoon or at least every four hours.
- (B) Bitrex Solution Aerosol Fit Test Procedure.
1. The test subject may not eat, drink (except plain water), smoke, or chew gum for 15 minutes before the test.
 2. The fit test uses the same enclosure as that described above.
 3. The test subject shall don the enclosure while wearing the respirator selected according to the General Requirements section of this appendix. The respirator shall be properly adjusted and equipped with any type particulate filter(s).
 4. A second DeVilbiss Model 40 Inhalation Medication Nebulizer or equivalent is used to spray the fit test solution into the enclosure. This nebulizer shall not be clearly marked to distinguish it from the screening test solution nebulizer.
 5. The fit test solution is prepared by adding 337.5 mg of Bitrex to 200 ml of a 5% salt (NaCl) solution in warm water.
 6. As before, the test subject shall breathe through his or her slightly open mouth with tongue extended, and be instructed to report if he/she tastes the bitter taste of Bitrex.
 7. The nebulizer is inserted into the hole in the front of the enclosure and an initial concentration of the fit test solution is sprayed into the enclosure using the same number of squeezes (either 10, 20 or 30 squeezes) based on the number of squeezes required to elicit a taste response as noted during the screening test.
 8. After generating the aerosol, the test subject shall be instructed to perform the exercises outlined in (14) of the General Requirements section of this appendix.
 9. Every 30 seconds the aerosol concentration shall be replenished using one half the number of squeezes used initially (e.g., 5, 10 or 15).
 10. The test subject shall indicate to the test conductor if at any time during the fit test the taste of Bitrex is detected. If the test subject does not report tasting the Bitrex, the test is passed.
 11. If the taste of Bitrex is detected, the fit is deemed unsatisfactory and the test is failed. A different respirator shall be tried and the entire test procedure is repeated (taste threshold screening and fit testing).