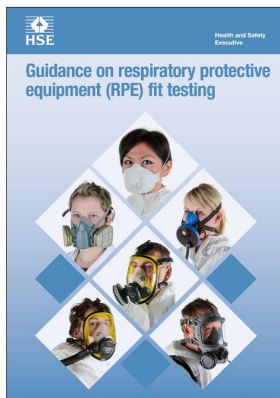


Guidance on respiratory protective equipment (RPE) fit testing



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Introduction

This guide gives advice on fit testing for the employer and those conducting fit tests.

This guide provides:

- information on fit test methods;
- information on what can be achieved from a fit test; and
- the core information to be included in a fit test report.

Following this guidance is not compulsory and you are free to take other actions to comply with the requirements of the law. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance as illustration of good practice.

HSE does not approve nor recommend any particular fit testing equipment. Any equipment included in this guidance provides representative information.

Further advice on the practical aspects of fit testing is provided by the British Safety Industry Federation (BSIF); this can be found at www.fit2fit.org.

Fit testing should be conducted by a competent person. Competence can be demonstrated by accreditation under the Fit2Fit RPE Fit Test Providers Accreditation Scheme. This scheme has been developed by the BSIF, together with industry stakeholders, and is supported by HSE. The scheme is not compulsory and employers are free to take other action to comply with the law. Further details on the scheme can be found at www.fit2fit.org.

Where respiratory protective equipment (RPE) is used as a control measure under health and safety legislation, it is vital that the selected RPE is both adequate and suitable. General advice on selection of RPE is covered in the HSE guidance document *Respiratory protective equipment at work: A practical guide* (HSG53).¹

To ensure that the selected RPE has the potential to provide adequate protection for individual wearers, the Approved Codes of Practice (ACOPs) supporting the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH),² the Control of Lead at Work Regulations,³ the Control of Asbestos Regulations,⁴ the Confined Spaces Regulations⁵ and the Ionising Radiations Regulations⁶ stipulate that tight-fitting RPE should be fit tested as part of the selection process.

If it is not possible for the wearer to obtain an adequate fit with the first choice of facepiece you should attempt fit testing using an alternative make, model or size of tight-fitting facepiece. Where you cannot achieve an adequate fit you should select another type of RPE that does not rely on a tight-fitting face seal, such as a loose-fitting respirator hood or helmet.

You should record the fit test by means of a report or certificate which should clearly state whether the result of the fit test was a pass or fail. Annex 1 shows the content that you should provide in a fit test report.

The fit test report should be available to the employee and accessible to others such as enforcement authorities. Collective reports should be available to safety representatives. You should record RPE examinations and tests – and, where appropriate, any repairs made – and retain them for at least five years.

The employer is responsible for meeting the cost of fit testing.

Guidance for fit testers

General

As a fit tester you have duties under health and safety at work legislation because if you do not carry out a fit test properly the wearer could be exposed to substances hazardous to health due to facepiece leakage.

RPE fit testing should be carried out by a competent person. A fit tester should have adequate knowledge, and have received adequate instruction and training in the following areas:

- selection of adequate and suitable RPE;
- examination of RPE and the ability to identify poorly maintained facepieces;
- ability to correctly fit a facepiece and perform pre-use wearer-seal checks;
- ability to recognise a poorly fitting facepiece;
- awareness of external factors that may affect the fit of the facepiece or the fit test result;
- the purpose and applicability of fit testing;
- the differences between, and the appropriate use of, QNFT and QLFT methods;
- the purpose of the fit test exercises;
- preparation of facepieces for fit testing;
- how to carry out diagnostic checks on the facepiece and the fit test equipment;
- capabilities and limitations of the fit test equipment;
- how to perform a correct fit test with the chosen method;
- awareness and knowledge of how to prevent and correct problems during fit testing;
- interpretation of fit test results;
- an understanding of the differences between fit factor, workplace protection factor (WPF),[†] assigned protection factor and nominal protection factor (NPF)[‡]; and
- HSE ACOPs and guidance that deal with fit testing of RPE.

[†] WPF is the protection provided by the RPE when used and measured in the workplace and is the ratio between the breathing zone concentration of the contaminant inside and outside of the facepiece.

[‡] NPF is the level of respiratory protection the facepiece is expected to provide under laboratory conditions and is the pass/fail for the particular European standard.