FAQ Facial Hair and Fit Testing

Campus Health Services coordinates and tracks fit testing for the clinical trainees at the Health Sciences Center.

Consistent with OSHA requirements, persons with beards or long sideburns cannot be fit tested due to the inability to get a good facial seal. **OSHA regulations prohibits those individuals from wearing a tight fitting respirator until the person is clean-shaven and fit-tested.**

Trainees cannot have facial hair that interferes with the respirator seal, as this would be a violation of OSHA requirements, and will prevent the respirator from making a good seal. The best strategy is to be completely clean shaven. Some facial hair styles can still work with a respirator, if the wearer's face is clean-shaven where the respirator seals against it, and any facial hair is short and neatly trimmed. There may not be any facial hair touching the edge of the seal on the mask.

**Beards:** Beards, regardless of thickness, length or style, are not acceptable for respirator use.

**Stubble:** Even a small amount of stubble can cause air leakage. Employees should shave the morning of testing.

**Sideburns:** Short, neatly trimmed sideburns no longer than the earlobe usually do not present a problem. Longer sideburns may interfere with respirator fit, particularly on full face respirators. Ensure sideburns are trimmed so they do not touch the respirator seal.

**Moustaches:** A short and neatly trimmed moustache may be acceptable, providing the surrounding skin is clean-shaven, and the moustache does not extend so far to the side as to cause facial hair to be between the respirator sealing edge and the skin. **If you are going to attempt a respirator fit test with a neatly trimmed moustache, you may be asked to trim or shave your moustache in order to be fit tested.**
Goatees: A short and neatly trimmed goatee may be acceptable, providing the surrounding skin is clean-shaven, and the goatee does not extend so far to the sides of the mouth or underneath the chin as to cause facial hair to be between the respirator sealing edge and the skin. The goatee must be short enough that the underside of your chin where the respirator seals is clean shaven.

References:

OSHA Regulation:

1910.134(g)(1) Facepiece seal protection.
1910.134(g)(1)(i) The employer shall not permit respirators with tight-fitting facepieces to be worn by employees who have:
1910.134(g)(1)(i)(A) Facial hair that comes between the sealing surface of the facepiece and the face or that interferes with valve function;