

Frequently Asked Questions: 3M Filtering Facepiece/Disposable Respirator Storage Conditions and Shelf Life

Why is 3M adding shelf life information for the 3M™ Filtering Facepiece/Disposable Respirators?

The addition of shelf life information to our 3M NIOSH-approved respirators is a way to communicate to our customers the storage conditions and potential longevity of our respirators. Traditionally the life cycle of these respirators commonly used in industrial workplace applications, from date of manufacture to use by the customer, has been short in duration as they are disposable. However, with the increased attention to respirator stockpiling, many customers have requested information on storage conditions and shelf life. We hope that by adding this information to the respirator packaging it will encourage our customers to employ good practices such as appropriate long term storage, rotation of stock and inventory management.

In the United States, per 29 CFR 1910.134, OSHA has required that respirators be stored in the original packaging and away from contaminated areas, dust, sunlight, extreme temperatures, excessive moisture and damaging chemicals. Canada's CSA Standard Z94.4 has a similar requirement.

What 3M Filtering Facepiece/Disposable Respirators have a shelf life?

We are in the process of establishing a shelf life for all of our filtering facepiece respirators and several models do contain shelf life information and storage conditions. The shelf life determination for each respirator model will be product specific, based on material components and testing. As 3M evaluates shelf life, we are also doing so based on the respirator as a system, and not solely focusing on filter media. Once the shelf life has been established, it will be clearly indicated on the box with "Use by: MM/YYYY" (month/year) and should be located near the hourglass icon. If you need shelf life information on a specific product please contact 3M Technical Service at 1-800-243-4630 in the United States. In Canada contact 1-800-267-4414. (Other countries please contact your local 3M office.)

Why does the packaging for some 3M Filtering Facepiece/Disposable Respirators have shelf life information and other respirator packaging does not?

3M has been incorporating shelf life information on the packaging and in the *User Instructions* of many of our filtering facepiece/disposable respirators. You may note that certain 3M filtering facepiece respirators already contain storage and shelf life information. As 3M goes through the process of updating the packaging for the balance of our NIOSH-approved filtering facepiece respirators, shelf life and storage information will be added. Please refer to the product packaging as shelf life will be specific to the model of the filtering facepiece respirator. The transition to updated packaging/labeling in relation to the storage conditions and shelf life has been initiated. However, for a period of time, you may see product packaging in the market place with and without storage condition and shelf life information included/incorporated. If you have questions about a specific product please contact 3M Technical Service at 1-800-243-4630 in the United States. In Canada contact 1-800-267-4414. (Other countries please contact your local 3M office.)

How is the respirator's shelf life communicated?

The storage conditions and shelf life are usually found on the bottom or side of the primary package. Storage conditions are depicted as a thermometer for temperature range and an umbrella for humidity. The shelf life for the NIOSH-approved respirators is in the form of a "use by" (expiry) date such as "Use by: MM/YYYY" (month/year) and should be located near the hourglass icon. This information is also located on the label of the shipper case or corrugated box. An explanation of the icons and additional information regarding shelf life and storage conditions can be found in the *User Instructions* provided with the product. Please refer to the product packaging as shelf life is specific to each model of the filtering facepiece respirator.