

## Respiratory Protection and Facial Hair



OSHA’s guidance regarding facial hair is expressed in the standard numbered CFR 1910.134(g)(1)(i) which states that the employer shall not permit respirators with tight-fitting face pieces to be worn by employees who have facial hair that comes between the sealing surface of the face piece and the face or that interferes with valve function; or any condition that interferes with the face-to-face piece seal or valve function. Facial stubble exceeding more than one day is considered excessive for most individuals causing interference with a respirator face piece seal.

### UW SER’s ITC Procedures Mirrors The OSHA Requirements

Individuals have from time to time stated that they would be able to pass a fit test even with a beard or goatee. Although this is not an option, experiments have shown that some individuals may be able to pass OSHA’s minimum requirements with a beard.

*The lowered fit factor experienced when facial hair is present is of such magnitude that no confidence can be placed on the protection factor of the respirator.*

All respirator users experience variability of fit from time to time. The variability occurs due to changes in strap tension, positioning of the face, and a host of other variables. Facial hair introduces additional variables. Facial hair is a dynamically changing thing in that hair length is constantly changing. Beards also accumulate moisture, natural oils and debris from the workplace.

Tests have shown that the presence of facial hair produced leakage that was 50 to 1000 times greater than found with

clean-shaven individuals. Leakage generally increased as the facial hair length increased.

A person who has hair such as stubble, mustache, sideburns, beard, goatee, long hairline, or bangs with are between the face and the sealing surface of the face piece shall not be permitted to wear a tight-fitting respirator. Facial hair exceeding a single, full day’s growth shall not be permitted. The sketches help to illustrate what is acceptable and what is not regarding facial hair.

#### Acceptable



Clean Shaven



Narrow Mustache

#### Unacceptable



Wide Mustache



Extended Side Burns



Goatee & Narrow Mustache



Goatee & Wide Mustache



FuManchu Mustache



Full Beard

**Don’t Let Facial Hair Compromise Your Safety!**