

Controlling exposures to prevent occupational lung disease

## Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) Guidance 5/5

# 5. Fit testing



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As our faces come in all shapes and sizes, each wearer needs to be supplied with a face mask which fits them properly. Fit testing is a method which demonstrates how well a face mask fits an individual wearer's face.

### Is Fit Testing a legal requirement?

**Selecting a suitable mask is a legal requirement, and fit testing is a means of demonstrating suitability for the intended wearer.**

### What type of face masks need to be fit tested?

#### All tight-fitting masks

These are masks whose performance relies on achieving a good seal between the mask and the wearer's face. These include:

##### Disposable masks

FFP1, FFP2 and FFP3 filtering face pieces



##### Re-usable half masks



##### Full face masks

Including those used with powered respirators and breathing apparatus



## Who can conduct the fit test?

Fit testing should be conducted by a competent person.

Regulation 7 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and regulation 12(4) of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) state that tight fitting RPE should be fit tested by a competent person upon initial selection.

The HSE fit testing guidance HSE 282/28 sets out 14 areas of competency. Competency in these areas is vital in order to conduct an effective fit test.



The British Safety Industry Federation (BSiF), with support from HSE, developed a competence scheme for fit testers. The [Fit2Fit scheme](#) is based on the 14 areas of competency set out by HSE. Details of fit testers who have demonstrated their competency through achieving the Fit2Fit Accreditation are listed on the BSiF scheme's website at [www.fit2fit.org](http://www.fit2fit.org)

## Your options

There are two options as follows:

### Contract out a fit tester

Consult the list of Fit2Fit Accredited fit testers on the [Fit2Fit website](#) and check their credentials. Details below will direct you to the suitable fit test method for the types of masks your operatives use.

### Develop an in-house fit test capability

In order to become competent there are many practical skills to be developed. Seek training and gain accreditation by Fit2Fit. Approved training providers can provide training for [Fit2Fit Accreditation](#).

## Will I need to consider re-tests? Yes

A fit test should be repeated if the wearer:

- loses or gains weight
- undergoes any substantial dental work, or
- develops any facial changes around the face seal area.

Please be aware if a new make or model is issued, a new fit test is required by the wearer.

Additionally a change in head-worn PPE - eg helmets and goggles - may require a re-test. It is good practice to have a system in place to ensure that repeat fit testing is carried out on a regular basis.

## Which fit testing method should I choose?

This depends on the type of mask.

There are two basic types – qualitative and quantitative. The table below provides information on the two methods to help you select the appropriate one for the type of RPE you use.

### Qualitative fit test (QLFT)



- Lower purchase cost than QNFT equipment
- Cannot be used to fit test full face masks
- Provides a pass/fail result based on the wearer's subjective assessment depending on their taste response
- Fit test can take longer than a QNFT due to the time required for the RPE wearer to clear their palate
- No facility to check the fit of a mask prior to a fit test
- Some wearers are not able to taste the fit test substances
- Requires fit test information to be recorded manually
- Does not require a power source
- Requires training in its use

### Quantitative fit test (QNFT)



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- Higher cost than QLFT equipment
- Can be used to fit test all types of tight-fitting masks
- Provides an independent objective measure of fit
- Fit test can be quicker than a QLFT
- Has a real-time fit-check facility to check the fit prior to the fit test, or as a means of investigating poor fitting masks
- Independent of wearer's taste response
- QNFT software incorporates a database for recording fit test information
- Requires a power source
- Requires training in its use

### Further information

[HSE282/28 Fit testing of respiratory protective equipment face pieces](#)  
[Fit2Fit RPE Fit Test Providers Accreditation Scheme](#)