

## *Farm Safety Series*

# Protecting Agricultural Workers in Dusty Areas

Field planting and harvesting can cause considerable wind-blown dust. Workers in dusty environments must be protected from dust particles entering their lungs as well as their eyes. The best eye protection for these workers is unvented goggles that fit snugly to the face. Dust masks will provide protection to the lungs, but they must fit properly and prevent particles from penetrating the mask as well as leaking around it.

There are several types and styles of dust particle masks available; however, all of these masks are made of fabric that traps the dust particles before they are breathed into the lungs. The most comfortable masks are made of stretchy material that fits snugly over the mouth and nose. To test the effectiveness of a mask, observe the mucus from your sinus cavities after removing the mask. If the mucus is discolored, the mask isn't working.

A respirator provides the most protection but may be cumbersome to use for longer periods (6 to 8 hours). Working with and in close proximity to some pesticides may require the use of a respirator. Determine whether it is required from consulting the pesticide label on the pesticide you plan to use. The label will also specify the cartridge needed for that pesticide if a respirator is required.

### ***Learning Points***

1. Protect your eyes and lungs from dust particles in dusty working environments.
2. Unvented goggles will protect your eyes from wind-blown field dust.
3. Properly fitting dust masks and respirators that filter particles will protect lungs from field dust.
4. Respirators may be necessary to protect workers that are working with or around pesticides.

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For more information, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county's name to find the number.

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