Determining the Need for a Respirator

In order to determine whether you require the use of a respirator in order to perform an assigned task, ask yourself these three (3) questions. If any are answered "Yes", a respirator should be used.

1. Will you be performing operations which produce dusts, fibers, fumes, mists or vapors/gases that could reasonably bypass your body's natural defense mechanisms? Base this decision on:
    a. the *byproducts* that the task is known to produce (e.g., fumes from welding);
    b. the known *degree of toxicity* of these contaminants (e.g., per your experience with the product, your department's Hazardous Materials Inventory (HMI), and/or the MSDS for that product;
    c. whether the use of *personal protective equipment* includes a recommendation that "a respirator MAY be required";
    d. the expected *concentration* of these contaminants (based on past emissions from the same or similar tasks, expected duration of task, and/or presence of general/local ventilation in the proposed work area);
    e. the *frequency/duration* of operation;
    f. whether you *smoke* (if particulates).
2. Do you find that, without respiratory protection, you become dizzy or nauseous, get a headache, begin coughing, or present any other symptoms of unhealthy exposure to the contaminants?
3. Has your supervisor or EH&S deemed (and/or does your Department's Respirator Program document) that the task requires respirator protection?

Common tasks which may require respiratory protection from PARTICULATES/MISTS include:

- Grinding
- Welding
- Sawing
- Scarfing
- Sandblasting
- Pesticide Application

Common tasks which may require respiratory protection from VAPORS/GASES include:

- Varnishing
- (Oil-based) Painting
- Zip-Stripping
- Dying
- Degreasing
- Sealing