

# How long does a filter last?

## When to replace or change filters in the respirator.

- ✓ For particulate filters or masks when the breathing resistance becomes excessive to the wearer.
- ✓ Any damage occurs eg. broken strap, hole burnt in mask etc.
- ✓ It becomes unhygienic i.e. it has been coughed/sneezed into and the inside is in an unacceptable condition.
- ✓ For combination filters (particulate and Gas & vapour), the capacity of each will depend on the airborne concentrations being filtered – it will fill at its own rate and need to be changed when full. This may be at a different rate to the other.
- ✓ The service life (ie how long will it perform) of any Gas & Vapour (G&V) cartridge is affected by many factors – capacity, concentration and identity of contaminants, breathing rates, humidity levels, ventilation, temperature, type of carbon etc.
- ✓ Smell and taste should NOT be used as a primary indicator for when to change a G&V cartridge.
- ✓ Some workplaces e.g. healthcare environments, may require masks/filters to be replaced after every use due to infection control procedures.
- ✓ Therefore, there is no specific timing involved and the frequency of replacement of products varies from task to task, situation to situation and product to product.



### **Shelf life of Filters & Cartridges**

Provided they are stored unopened in the original packaging, 3M cartridges and filters have a shelf life of three or five years (depending on the product) from manufacture date.

Once any gas & vapour cartridge is removed from their packaging they should be replaced after six months as recommended by Australian / New Zealand Standard 1715 irrespective of the duration of use (even if they have not been used).

**Every workplace is unique and needs to assess their specific situation to determine an adequate filter change schedule.**

When a Gas & Vapour cartridge on reusable respirators have reached their capacity, it will no longer protect the wearer as the G&V will pass straight through to the wearer.

Particulate filters will keep removing contaminants but will become harder and harder to breathe through, increasing discomfort.