# Ask The Expert: Can You Make Workers Wear “Uncomfortable” PPE?



## QUESTION

Some of our custodial workers don’t want to wear dust masks because they’re ‘uncomfortable.’ Are we allowed to make them to use the masks for their safety after proper fit testing’

## ANSWER

Yes

## EXPLANATION

Rule 1: Under OHS laws, you must ensure workers use appropriate PPE and respiratory protective equipment.

Rule 2: You must accommodate workers’ disabilities to the point of undue hardship.

Rule 2 doesn’t contradict Rule 1 in this case because mere lack of comfort isn’t a disability. However, Rule 2 would apply if the refusal was based on a condition that was, e.g., hypersensitivities or allergies. In that situation:

1. You’d have the right to ask the worker to provide a doctor’s note or other verification of the disability requiring accommodation; and
2. You wouldn’t have to make accommodations that would endanger the worker’s or another worker’s health and safety; such accommodations would be deemed undue hardship.