

USER REPORT

Dust Bee Gone Mask

by Carol Rix

Our health, particularly the condition of our lungs, is one thing that we cannot afford to neglect when we turn wood.

Turning fills the air we breathe with dust. Some types of wood dust cause a quick reaction and we experience ill effects within minutes or hours of breathing it in – sneezes, runny nose, sore eyes, irritated skin and inflamed mucous membranes. Even if there isn't an immediate allergic reaction, lungs filled with dust accumulated over time will bring on a variety of ailments. Would you willingly choose to take on asthma, emphysema or bronchiectasis?

For woodturners, lung protection is essential. It can be provided in the form of a full-helmet respirator which blows filtered air over the face and provides face and lung protection, or a face mask over the mouth, usually combined with goggles or glasses for eye protection.

As a professional turner, working eight hours a day, 5-6 days a week, I use both respirator helmets and face masks. The helmet is worn when a large piece of

Photo.2: The author at her lathe wearing the Dust Bee Gone mask



Photo.1: The effective longlasting Dust Bee Gone Mask comes in four sizes to suit different faces



wood is swinging on the lathe and I want full face as well as lung protection.

However, when small faceplate or spindle work is being done, a dust mask and protective glasses are sufficient. I find that they are more comfortable than wearing a helmet and I don't feel isolated from what is happening around me.

Mask Selection

There are a number of dust masks available, ranging in price from the cheap disposable paper type to the Dust-Bee-Gone mask. Over time I, as well as a number of my woodturning students, have tried most of the masks on the market, ie. the disposable paper ones, the rubber units fitted with replaceable filters, 'gas masks' and the Dust Bee Gone.

In addition to the effectiveness of the dust filtration, the main concerns have been fit, comfort and ease of vision, ie. no fogging of glasses or goggles. Assessed against these criteria the Dust Bee Gone mask has proven to be the most satisfactory of the masks we've used.

The Dust Bee Gone has a very simple design consisting of two face-sized rectangular pieces of interlaced monofilament material, held in place with cloth edging and straps. The filter cloth is soft and fits easily around the face. You can choose from four different sizes — small, medium, large and extra large — to suit the shape of your face.

The secret (and it's not a big one!) is in getting the fit right when putting the mask on. Ensure that the folds in the sides of the filter cloth face down and press the nose wire, which is sewn into the top edging, over the nose to form a snug fit.

Pull the upper elastic strap

above the ears and tighten it (not too tight) by means of the buckle. Fix the lower strap around the neck with the soft hook and loop connector.

The manufacturer claims that the Dust Bee Gone mask can stop dust particles down to three microns. Note that it is not suitable for spray paints and pesticides.

Effective and Longlasting

My first mask was purchased in 2001 when I started turning professionally. It retailed for \$60-\$70 — a lot, I thought at the time, for a little bit of cloth and some straps.

The packaging stated that 'with reasonable care, (the mask) should last three to five years if worn 6 to 8 hours a day'. So, I gave it 'reasonable care', which included not scrunching it up in my pocket, rinsing it out in warm soapy water every evening after work and hanging it on the bathroom doorknob overnight.

By early 2006 the fibres in the mask started to break down so I bought my second one. The Dust Bee Gone had definitely lasted as long as the manufacturer said it would, had been comfortable on my face, enabled hot exhaled air to pass through so my glasses didn't fog up and had been effective in stopping my lungs filling with dust. When I am doing demonstrations, the mask is comfortable to wear and my voice can still be heard clearly by the audience.

So, in spite of my initial concern about the price of the mask, after five solid years of use I would recommend the Dust Bee Gone as the one to get if you want lung protection, comfort, clear glasses and easy maintenance.

The Dust Bee Gone mask is available from Carroll's Woodcraft Supplies, 66 Murradoc Road, Drysdale VIC 3222, Ph: 03 5251 3874, Fax: 03 5251 3864, www.cws.au.com. It retails for \$59.90 (same price for all sizes).

