



**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH  
AND SAFETY**

**VOLUNTARY USE OF FILTERING FACEPIECE RESPIRATORS**

**Review each of the following points with the employee (have employee initial boxes)**

**1. FILTERING FACEPIECE RESPIRATORS AND OSHA REQUIREMENTS**

- Filtering Facepiece Respirators (also called dust masks) are considered true respirators according to OSHA. N95 refers to the NIOSH certification of the filter media that comprises the facepiece. N means that it is not oil resistant and 95 refers to it being 95% effective at filtering particles at the 0.3 micron level. N95 is the most common type of filtering facepiece respirator. Other NIOSH-certified filtering facepiece respirators include R95, P95, N100 and P100.
- Voluntary use is defined as use for employee comfort purposes only. No hazard exists that requires use of a respirator and the use of the respirator does not produce any additional hazard. At the University, the only acceptable respirator for voluntary use is the filtering facepiece respirator. Use of any other type of respirator, for example, a ½ face elastomeric respirator with cartridges requires full compliance with the University of Connecticut's Respirator Program.
- If an employee is required to wear a filtering facepiece respirator (to protect against a respiratory hazard or as required by the employer), full compliance with the University's Respirator Program is required, which includes a medical evaluation by the University's chosen physician or other licensed health care professional, respirator training and fit testing. All respirators, including N95s, can restrict breathing and are not recommended for those with certain medical conditions.
- OSHA requires that all employees voluntarily wearing filtering facepiece respirators receive basic information on respirators as provided in Appendix D of its Respirator Standard, 1910.134 (which is found at the end of this document). – **Review Appendix D with the employee. Signature of this training form certifies receipt of Appendix D within 29 CFR 1910.134, as required by OSHA**

**2. HOW TO USE AND WEAR A FILTERING FACEPIECE RESPIRATOR**

- Inspect respirators prior to use, including new units out of the box. Check for rips and tears. Make sure straps are securely attached, nose piece is attached properly, and that no obvious defects exist.
- Proper use of the respirator is important. Without it, the respirator is ineffective against the workplace contaminants. Follow manufacturers' instructions for use. – **Review and follow manufacturer's instructions with employee.**
- Filtering Facepiece Respirators are not designed to be one-size-fits-all. When use is required, respirator fit testing is necessary to ensure that the individual is using the appropriate model and/or size to achieve an adequate seal.
- Beards and other facial hair negate the effectiveness of the respirator because they prevent an adequate seal between the respirator and the face. Skin afflictions, such as dermatitis, or scars, could affect the ability to produce a seal.
- User seal checks confirm that an adequate seal with the face is achieved when the mask is applied. User seal checks should be done every time the mask is put on and every time it is re-adjusted on the face. – **Review manufacturer's instructions for conducting user seal checks with employee.**

### 3. LIMITATIONS OF PPE

- Filtering facepiece respirators are only useful for protection against particulates. They are not to be used in oxygen-deficient atmospheres or atmospheres that contain hazards that are immediately dangerous to life and health (IDLH). Odors will still be noted when using the respirator because it does not filter out gases or vapors. The respirator will not provide adequate protection to the user if a good seal with the face is not achieved.

### 4. CARE, MAINTENANCE, USEFUL LIFE AND DISPOSAL OF PPE

- Filtering Facepiece Respirators are considered disposable PPE. They cannot be cleaned, especially when they become wet or soiled. They cannot be shared with other employees.
- New respirators should be stored in a clean, dry location, protected from sunlight, chemicals, water, and physical damage.
- Respirators can only be used in conjunction with a written respiratory protection program. The University's Written Respirator Program can be found at <https://media.ehs.uconn.edu/Occupational/PPE/RespiratorProtectionProgram.pdf>.

## OSHA's Respiratory Protection Standard, 29 CFR 1910.134

### Appendix D to 29 CFR 1910.134 (Mandatory) Information for Employees Using Respirators When Not Required Under the Standard

Respirators are an effective method of protection against designated hazards when properly selected and worn. Respirator use is encouraged, even when exposures are below the exposure limit, to provide an additional level of comfort and protection for workers. However, if a respirator is used improperly or not kept clean, the respirator itself can become a hazard to the worker. Sometimes, workers may wear respirators to avoid exposures to hazards, even if the amount of hazardous substance does not exceed the limits set by OSHA standards. If your employer provides respirators for your voluntary use, or if you provide your own respirator, you need to take certain precautions to be sure that the respirator itself does not present a hazard.

You should do the following:

1. Read and heed all instructions provided by the manufacturer on use, maintenance, cleaning and care, and warnings regarding the respirators limitations.
2. Choose respirators certified for use to protect against the contaminant of concern. NIOSH, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, certifies respirators. A label or statement of certification should appear on the respirator or respirator packaging. It will tell you what the respirator is designed for and how much it will protect you.
3. Do not wear your respirator into atmospheres containing contaminants for which your respirator is not designed to protect against. For example, a respirator designed to filter dust particles will not protect you against gases, vapors, or very small solid particles of fumes or smoke.
4. Keep track of your respirator so that you do not mistakenly use someone else's respirator.