

**Respiratory Protection Program
Example Document**

Southwest District Health Unit

Respiratory Protection Program

The purpose of this program is to ensure that all _____ employees required to wear respiratory protection as a condition of their employment are protected from respiratory hazards through the proper use of respirators.

Program Administration

The Executive Officer and Emergency Preparedness and Response Department Environmental Health Practitioner are responsible for the administration of the respiratory protection program and for monitoring the ongoing and changing needs for respiratory protection.

Program Scope and Application

This program applies to all _____ employees who could potentially be exposed to airborne respiratory illnesses during normal work operations, and during non-routine or emergency situations. Some of the types of work activities required to wear respirators are outlined in the table below:

Work Process	Location	Type of Respirator
Contact tracing/disease investigation (Airborne Precautions)	Community Settings PAPR	N95 – Disposable
Patient contact/care (Airborne Precautions)	Patient Care Areas PAPR	N95 - Disposable

Identifying Work Hazards

The respirators selected will be used for respiratory protection from potentially airborne infectious diseases; they do not provide protection from chemical exposure. Through normal working situations employees may be asked to have contact with clients who could be infected with a potentially airborne infectious agent such as *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. Examples of other potentially airborne infectious diseases that Public Health employees may be exposed to in emergency situations include: Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), measles and smallpox.

Respiratory Selection

- Only respirators approved by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) will be selected and used.
 - N95 respirators are available for contact tracing, disease investigation and patient contact/care (Airborne Precautions).
 - A powered air-purifying respirator (PAPR) is available for contact tracing, disease investigation and patient contact/care. A PAPR may be selected for use if:
 - The N95 respirator choice(s) does not fit.
 - Employee has facial hair or facial deformity that would interfere with mask-to-face seal.
 - The N95 respirator choice(s) are unavailable.
 - Desired for high-risk aerosol-generating procedures.

Medical Evaluation

Persons assigned to tasks that require respiratory protection must be physically able to perform the tasks while wearing a respirator.

The Executive Officer and Emergency Preparedness and Response Department Environmental Health Practitioner will determine individual medical clearance by a medical questionnaire. Individuals answering yes to any of the questions regarding health or medical conditions will need to contact their personal physician/health care professional for written medical clearance. Employees who have not gone through the respiratory protection program, are without medical clearance or refusing a medical evaluation will not be allowed to work in conditions requiring respirator use.

Re-evaluation will be conducted under these circumstances:

- Employee reports physical symptoms that are related to the ability to use a respirator (wheezing, shortness of breath, chest pain, etc.).
- It is identified that an employee is having a medical problem during respirator use.
- The employee's healthcare professional determines an employee needs to be re-evaluated and the frequency of the evaluation.
- A change occurs in the workplace conditions that may result in an increased physiological burden on the employee.
- Employee facial size/shape/structure has changed significantly.

All examinations and questionnaires are to remain confidential between the employee and Executive Officer and Emergency Preparedness and Response Department Environmental Health Practitioner.

Fit Testing

After the initial fit test, fit tests must be completed at least annually, or more frequently if there is a change in status of the wearer or if the employer changes model or type of respiratory protection (see below). As of 7/1/04 the OSHA Respiratory Protection Standard 29 CFR 1910.134 applies to health care workers. This policy will be changed to reflect the most current OSHA regulations as new information becomes available.

Fit testing procedures can be found in an Appendix to the Regional Public Health Plan for _____.

Fit tests are conducted to determine that the respirator fits the user adequately and that a good seal can be obtained. Respirators that do not seal do not offer adequate protection.

Fit testing is required for tight-fitting respirators.

Fit tests will be conducted:

- Prior to being allowed to wear a respirator.
- If the _____ changes respirator product.
- If employee changes weight by 10% or more.
- If employee has changes in facial structure or scarring.
- As Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards require.

Proper Respirator Use

General Use

Employees will use their respirators under conditions specified by this program, and in accordance with the training they receive on the use of the selected model(s). In addition, the respirator shall not be used in a manner for which it is not certified by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and health (NIOSH) or by its manufacturer.

All employees shall conduct positive and negative pressure user seal checks each time they wear a respirator. All employees shall leave a potentially contaminated work area to clean (PAPR) or change (N95 – disposable) their respirator if the respirator is impeding their ability to work.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

N95 – Disposable:

- If patient not in Contact Precautions (e.g., TB), discard if soiled, if breathing becomes labored, or if structural integrity is compromised.
- If patient in Airborne Precautions is also in Contact Precautions (e.g., SARS, smallpox), discard after use.

PAPR:

- Follow manufacturer's recommendations on cleaning.

Inspecting, Maintenance and Repairs

All types of respirators should be inspected prior to use.

- N95 – Disposable
 - Examine the face piece of the disposable respirator to determine if it has structural integrity. Discard if there are nicks, abrasions, cuts or creases in seal area or if the filter material is physically damaged or soiled.
 - Check the respirator straps to be sure they are not cut or otherwise damaged.
 - Make sure the metal nose clip is in place and functions properly.
 - Disposable respirators are not to be stored after use. They are to be discarded.

- PAPR
 - Inspect the breathing tube and body of the High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filter for damage.
 - Examine the hood for physical damage (if parts are damaged, contact the Respiratory Program Administrator).
 - Check for airflow prior to use.
 - Follow manufacturer's recommendations on maintenance, including battery recharging.

Respiratory Training

Workers will be trained prior to the use of a respirator and thereafter when deemed necessary by the Emergency Preparedness and Response Environmental Health Practitioner in conjunction with the Executive Officer.

Training will include:

- Identify hazards, potential exposure to these hazards, and health effects of hazards.
- Respirator fit, improper fit, usage, limitations, and capabilities for maintenance, usage, cleaning and storage.
- Emergency use if applicable.
- Inspecting, donning, removal, seal check and trouble shooting.
- Explaining respirator program (policies, procedures, OSHA standard, resources).

Evaluating/Updating Program

The Executive Health Officer and Emergency Preparedness and Response Department Environmental Health Practitioner will complete an annual evaluation of the respiratory protection program.

Evaluate any feedback information.

The Executive Officer and Emergency Preparedness and Response Department Environmental Health Practitioner will review any new hazards or changes in policy that would require respirator use.

The Emergency Preparedness and Response Department Environmental Health Practitioner will make recommendations to the Executive Officer for any changes needed in the respiratory protection program.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Executive Officer and Emergency Preparedness and Response Department Environmental Health Practitioner are responsible for the administration of the respiratory protection program and for monitoring the ongoing and changing needs for respiratory protection.

The Emergency Preparedness and Response Environmental Health Practitioner responsibilities and duties in the administering of the respiratory protection program include:

- Identify work areas, processes or tasks that require respiratory protection.
- Monitor OSHA policy and standards for changes and recommend changes to the Executive Officer to agency's policy.
- Recommend and select respiratory protection products.
- Monitor respirator use to ensure that respirators are used in accordance with their certification.
- Distribute and review education/medical questionnaire.
- In conjunction with the Executive Officer evaluate any feedback information or surveys.
- Arrange for and conduct training and fit testing for all employees. Ensure new employees are trained and fit tested.
- Conduct annual retraining and fit testing.
- Ensure proper storage and maintenance of respiratory protection equipment.

The Executive Officer in conjunction with the Emergency Preparedness and Response Department Environmental Health Practitioner and appropriate department head are responsible for ensuring that the respiratory protection program is implemented in their particular department.

Department heads, in addition to being knowledgeable about the program requirements for their own protection, must also ensure that the program is understood and followed by the employees under their charge. Responsibilities of the department head include:

- Knowing the hazards in the department in which they and their staff work.
- Knowing types of respirators that need to be used.
- Ensuring the respirator program and worksite procedures are followed in their department.
- Enforcing/encouraging staff to use required respirators.
- Ensuring employees receive training and/or retraining if needed.
- Notifying Executive Officer and Emergency Preparedness and Response Department Environmental Health Practitioner with any problems with respirator use, or changes in work processes that would impact airborne contaminant levels in their departments.

Employee responsibilities include:

- Participate in all training.
- Knowing the type of respirators that they need to use.
- Wearing the respirator when indicated.
- Ensuring proper storage and maintenance of respirator assigned to them.
- Reporting malfunctions or concerns to the Executive Officer and Emergency Preparedness Response and Department Environmental Health Practitioner.

Documentation and Record-keeping

The Emergency Preparedness and Response Department Environmental Health Practitioner and/or the Executive Officer maintains record of employees trained and fit tested and the due date for annual re-evaluation for retraining/fit testing to ensure employees are protected from respiratory hazards through the proper use of respirators.

The Executive Officer and Emergency Preparedness and Response Department Environmental Health Practitioner maintains the medical information for all employees covered under the respiratory program.

The completed medical forms and documented medical recommendations are confidential and will remain with Executive for the duration of the employment of the individual plus thirty years.

References

NIOSH Respiratory Protection Program (<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/respirators/>).

US Department of Health and Human Services, 1999, OSHA Technical Manual:
Respiratory Protection 29 CFR 1910.134
(<http://www.osha.gov/SLRC/etools/respiratory/ohsfiles/otherdocs.html>)