

Public Health Respiratory Protection Program Template

Policy

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 Components

- Program Administration
- Program Scope/Application
- Identifying Work Hazards
- Respirator Selection
- Medical Evaluations
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- Proper Respirator Use
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- Inspecting, Maintenance and Repairs
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Program Administration

- _____ (example: Public Health Supervisor, employer's name, human resources person) will be responsible for the administration of the respiratory protection program and thus is called the Respiratory Program Administrator (RPA).
- _____ (example: Public Health Supervisor, employer's name, human resources person) will be responsible 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	N95- disposable PAPR
Patient contact/care (Airborne Precautions)	Patient Care Areas	N95- disposable PAPR

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.

Respirator 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 (*include this only if your agency has one or intends to buy one*):
 - A PAPR may be selected for use if:
 1. The N95 respirator choice(s) does not fit
 2. Employee has facial hair or facial deformity that would interfere with mask-to-face seal
 3. The N95 respirator choice(s) are unavailable
 4. 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.
- _____ (*example: Community Health Services Medical Consultant, occupational health physician, personal physician*) will determine individual medical clearance by a medical questionnaire and/or medical exam. Employees refusing a medical evaluation will not be allowed to work in conditions requiring respirator use.
- Re-evaluation will be conducted under these circumstances:
 1. Employee reports physical symptoms that are related to the ability to use a respirator. (wheezing, shortness of breath, chest pain, etc.)
 2. It is identified that an employee is having a medical problem during respirator use.
 3. The healthcare professional performing the evaluation determines an employee needs to be re-evaluated and the frequency of the evaluation.
 4. A change occurs in the workplace conditions that may result in an increased physiological burden on the employee.
 5. Employee facial size/shape/structure has changed significantly.
- All examinations and questionnaires are to remain confidential between the employee and _____ (*example: Community Health Services Medical Consultant, personal physician*).

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 template will be changed to reflect the most current OSHA regulations as new information becomes available.

Fit testing procedures can be found in _____ (example: *policy and procedure manual*).

- 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:
 1. Prior to being allowed to wear any respirator.
 2. If the public health department changes respirator product.
 3. If employee changes weight by 10% or more.
 4. If employee has changes in facial structure or scarring.
 5. 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
 - *(Recommendation on cleaning and disinfection differ among manufacturers. Include these recommendations here.)*

Inspecting, Maintenance and Repairs

All types of respirators should be inspected prior to use.

- N95 - disposable
 1. 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.
 2. Check the respirator straps to be sure they are not cut or otherwise damaged.
 3. Make sure the metal nose clip is in place and functions properly (if applicable).
 4. Disposable respirators are not to be stored after use. They are to be discarded.

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

Respirator Training

- Workers will be trained prior to the use of a respirator and thereafter when deemed necessary by the Respiratory Program Administrator.

- 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 Respiratory Program Administrator will complete an annual evaluation of the respiratory protection program.

- Evaluate any feedback information or surveys.

- The Respiratory Program Administrator will review any new hazards or changes in policy that would require respirator use.

- The Respiratory Program Administrator will make recommendations for any changes needed in the respiratory protection program.

Roles and Responsibilities

Respiratory Program Administrator (RPA)

The Respiratory Program Administrator is responsible for administering the respiratory protection program.

Duties of the RPA include:

- Identify work areas, processes, or tasks that require respiratory protection.
- Monitor OSHA policy and standards for changes and make changes to agency's policy
- Select respiratory protection products.
- Monitor respirator use to ensure that respirators are used in accordance with their certification.
- Distribute and evaluate education/medical questionnaire.
- Evaluate any feedback information or surveys.
- Arrange for and/or conduct training and fit testing.
- Ensure proper storage and maintenance of respiratory protection equipment.

Supervisor

The Supervisor for the respiratory protection program may also be the Respiratory Program Administrator. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that the respiratory protection program is implemented in their particular units.

In addition to being knowledgeable about the program requirements for their own protection, Supervisors must also ensure that the program is understood and followed by the employees under their charge.

Duties of the Supervisor include:

- Knowing the hazards in the area in which they work.
- Knowing types of respirators that need to be used.
- Ensuring the respirator program and worksite procedures are followed.
- Enforcing/encouraging staff to use required respirators.
- Ensuring employees receive training and medical evaluations.
- Coordinating annual retraining and/or fit testing.
- Notifying _____ (example: RPA, Public Health Supervisor, employer's name, human resources person) with any problems with respirator use, or changes in work processes that would impact airborne contaminant levels.
- Ensure proper storage and maintenance of all respirators.

Employee

- Participate in all training.
- Wear respirator when indicated.
- Maintain equipment.
- Report malfunctions or concerns.

Other

- *Responsibilities may vary with your Local Public Health Department*

Documentation and Record-keeping

- A written copy of this program can be found in _____ (*example: policy and procedure manual*).
- _____ (*example: RPA, Public Health Supervisor, employer's name, human resources person*) 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/in _____ (*example: RPA, the healthcare provider conducting the evaluation, Public Health Supervisor, employer's name, human resources person*).
- All relevant medical information must be maintained 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/SLTC/etools/respiratory/oshfiles/otherdocs.html>)



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