

# SAFETY FOCUS

## RESPIRATORY PROTECTION

Respiratory protective equipment is a particular type of personal protective equipment used to protect the individual wearer against inhalation of hazardous substances. Respirators are an effective method of protection against designated hazards when properly selected, fitted, and worn.

**WHAT:** Respiratory protection includes two main types of respirators: air purifying respirators and supplied air respirators. Air purifying respirators, such as N95 masks and half- and full-face devices, rely on filters to remove airborne contaminants. Supplied air units do not filter but deliver “clean” air to the face piece and are most often associated with firefighting. All respirators used on campus must be models approved by the National Institute of Occupational Health (NIOSH). Face coverings, such as surgical or cloth masks, are not considered “respiratory protection” in the context of occupational safety.

**WHEN:** Use of a respirator may be required for situations in which permissible exposure limits (PELs) of airborne contaminate are exceeded or in which there may be exposure to aerosol transmissible biological agents, and cannot be reduced or eliminated by other means. A hazard assessment, conducted by EHS, is required to determine whether or not respiratory protection is needed. Respirator use should only be considered after other protective measures, such as eliminating the hazardous material or using engineering controls, such as a fume hood or biosafety cabinet have been evaluated and ruled out. Employees may not use respiratory protection until an official hazard assessment has been conducted.

**HOW:** Employees required to wear a respirator must obtain medical clearance prior to use. The medical clearance process ensures that

wearing a respirator will not contribute to, or create, a health issue for the affected employee. Once medical clearance has been issued, the employee must complete a fit test using their own respirator (supplied by their department). A fit test ensures that the respirator fits properly and will provide the desired protection. Employees required to wear a respirator must be enrolled in the written Respiratory Protection Program for the affected area.

To request a hazard assessment, schedule a respirator fit test or for instructions on obtaining medical clearance contact EHS at 801-581-6590

All employees required to wear a respirator must be trained on the proper use, maintenance and storage of their respirator. Training on respiratory protection can be found here: <https://utah.bridgeapp.com/learner/courses/2066/slide/16532>

A copy of the written Respiratory Protection Program template can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/4yhpt327>



Image provided by OSHA