



Interim Recommendations: Respiratory Protection for Residents Reentering Previously Flooded Areas and Homes

Do I need to use a respirator when I go home?

If you need to collect belongings or do basic clean up in your previously flooded home, you do not usually need to use a respirator (a mask worn to prevent breathing in harmful substances). Times when you may want to use a respirator are explained below.

Inside Your Home or Other Buildings

Before you enter your home or any other building, make sure it:

- Is structurally safe
- Doesn't have natural gas leaks or other safety problems

You do not usually need to wear a respirator when you are inside a home or building unless you are doing something that creates a lot of dust in the air like sweeping dust, using power saws and equipment, or cleaning up mold. If you have to be around dust,

- Limit your contact with the dust as much as possible.
- Use wet mops or vacuums with HEPA filters instead of dry sweeping.
- Wear a respirator that protects against dust in the air.

You can find more information about building safety at the following websites:

- [Reentering Your Flooded Home](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/mold/pdf/reenterfloodedhome.pdf)
(<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/mold/pdf/reenterfloodedhome.pdf>)
- [Potential Environmental Health Hazards When Returning to Homes and Businesses](http://www.epa.gov/katrina/sep14returnhomeadvisory.htm)
From US Environmental Protection Agency
(<http://www.epa.gov/katrina/sep14returnhomeadvisory.htm>)
- [Repairing Your Flooded Home](http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0_570_,00.html)
From the Red Cross
(http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0_570_,00.html)

The N95 respirator (or N95 mask) has been approved by CDC/NIOSH and can give you some protection from dust and mold in the air. They must **fit well and be worn correctly** to protect you. You can buy N95 respirators in safety supply stores and in most home improvement and hardware stores. If you have trouble breathing or have any other trouble when you wear a respirator for cleanup work, stop working and contact a doctor or other medical provider.

More information about mold in buildings can be found at the following websites:

- [Protect Yourself from Mold](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/mold/protect.asp)
(<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/mold/protect.asp>)

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- [A Brief Guide to Mold, Moisture, and Your Home](#)
From US Environmental Protection Agency
(<http://www.epa.gov/mold/cleanupguidelines.html>)

Outside Your Home or Other Buildings

You do not usually need to wear a respirator when you are outside because the outside air is generally clean. However, when you are in a very dusty environment (you may be shoveling debris, sweeping dust, or using power equipment), then you may want to wear a respirator like the N95 respirator that is described above.

Note 1: If you wear an N95 respirator, read and follow the manufacturer's instructions on the package or insert. This will help you choose the best size of respirator and to wear it properly. Beards will prevent the respirator from fitting tightly. Because respirators are meant to be used by healthy workers who have the help of training, medical evaluations, and proper fit, the amount of protection provided to the general public may be much less.

Additional information on respirator use can be found at the following website:

- [Respirator Fact Sheet](#)
What You Should Know in Deciding Whether to Buy Escape Hoods, Gas Masks, or Other Respirators for Preparedness at Home and Work. From The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.
(<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/topics/respirators/factsheets/respfact.html>)

Note 2: No U.S. agency tests and certifies respirators for public use. However, CDC/NIOSH tests and certifies respirators for use by workers to protect against workplace hazards. Respirators certified by CDC/NIOSH will say "NIOSH Approved" and will have an approval label that identifies the hazard it will protect against. The N95 respirator is only approved for dust (from sweeping, sawing, mold removal, and other activities that cause dust) in the air. The N95 respirator is not approved for chemicals or gases in the air, such as carbon monoxide, and will **not** protect you from them. If you smell a strong chemical odor, you should leave the area right away.

For more information, visit www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters,
or call CDC at 800-CDC-INFO (English and Spanish) or 888-232-6348 (TTY).

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