

GUIDANCE ON USE OF RESPIRATORY PROTECTION FOR H1N1 INFLUENZA

Job tasks that require DOI employees to come in direct contact with persons known or suspected to be infected with H1N1 influenza (medium risk or higher) require the use of respiratory protection. The general working population whose jobs do not put them in direct contact with infected individuals do not need to be issued respirators. Occupational exposure risk can be reduced through the use of appropriate respiratory protection, however other protective measures such as thorough hand washing, personal hygiene, and social distancing are the primary protective measures (see Appendix F, DOI Pandemic Influenza Plan).

Approved respiratory protection equipment refers to devices that have been tested and certified by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health for protection against specific contaminants. In the case of infectious agents such as H1N1 influenza, a particulate respirator offers protection against virus containing aerosols. The classification of N-95 refers to a filter media that is 95% efficient in filtering very small particulate matter (<0.3microns). Although these are available as disposable filtering face pieces, they are still considered respirators and must be used in accordance with a respiratory protection program. Surgical masks are not a certified respiratory protection device and do not provide a seal on the face. They are not a substitute for respirators in an occupational exposure situation.

RESPIRATORY PROTECTION PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS:

To ensure the respirators are properly selected, used, fit tested, and do not endanger the wearer, OSHA requires a Respiratory Protection Program. Employees issued respirators for jobs that put them in contact with persons known or suspected of having influenza must be included in a respiratory protection program. The OSHA Respiratory Protection Standard specifies the requirements of a program in 29 CFR 1910.134. A template program to help facilities develop their programs is attached.

Development of a respirator program includes the following steps:

- **Designate a program administrator**

The program administrator is responsible for administering or overseeing the program. This individual must be qualified by training or experience to implement the program. The program administrator also conducts the required evaluations of program effectiveness. See your office, regional, or bureau safety manager for more specifics.

- **Select the proper respirator**

Ensure you are selecting respirators that have a good sealing surface and come in varying sizes to meet the needs of your employees. They have a NIOSH certification as passing the requirements for an N-95 respirator. A listing of manufacturers and contacts are included in the table below.

- **Provide medical evaluations for employees**

Respirator use may place a physiological burden on employees. Therefore, medical

evaluations are needed to determine if the employee is able to use a respirator. These evaluations are required before the employee is fit tested or required to wear a respirator. The medical evaluation is conducted by a physician or other licensed health care professional (PLHCP) using a confidential medical questionnaire or an initial medical examination that obtains the same information as the questionnaire. This questionnaire is found in Appendix C of the OSHA respiratory protection regulation. Depending upon the results of the initial evaluation, a follow-up medical examination may be needed before a final determination is made regarding the employee's ability to use a respirator. The medical questionnaire can be completed by the employee and sent to a PLHCP for review. Federal Occupational Health (FOH) can provide the medical review of the questionnaire. The link to the FOH office directory is <http://www.foh.dhhs.gov/whereweare/directory.asp>. Additionally, several of the manufacturer's can provide this service.

- **Conduct fit testing**

Respirators that have a tight-fitting facepiece are not one-size-fits-all. These facepieces must form a proper seal around the wearer's face in order to prevent contaminated air from leaking into the facepiece. Therefore, fit testing is required before initial use and at least annually for all employees who are required to wear a respirator with a tight-fitting facepiece. This applies to both air-purifying and atmosphere-supplying respirators regardless of whether they are operating in a positive or negative pressure mode. The fit testing protocols can be found in Appendix A of the OSHA respiratory protection regulation. Manufacturers or their representatives often provide fit testing and training to their customers.

- **Develop a written respiratory protection program**

All the elements of your respirator program must be incorporated into a written respiratory protection program that is work-site specific. It will help to have a clear set of policies and procedures in place when you conduct your training. A template for a local respiratory protection program is attached.

- **Provide Training**

Respirator training must be provided to all employees who are required to wear respirators. This training needs to be comprehensive, covering all aspects of respirator use, including such topics as the purpose, capabilities, limitations, inspection, and care of the respirator. See your safety manager for training resources.

OSHA Respirator Standard 29 CFR 1910.134 Appendix A.

Fit Testing Protocol:

http://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=9780

OSHA Respirator Standard 29 CFR 1910.134 Appendix C.

Medical Questionnaire

http://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=9783

Written Program Template: This template meets the requirements of the OSHA standard and covers the use of any respirator at the workplace.

WHERE TO PURCHASE RESPIRATORS

Filtering face piece N-95 respirators can be purchased directly from the manufacturer or from a local supplier. The table below is a listing of manufacturers and their contact information. Under normal circumstances manufacturers representatives are available to conduct the respirator training session and to perform fit testing. Another source for training and fit testing is the Federal Occupational Health program. They can provide contractors to come to individual locations to perform the required training and fit testing and may also help with other aspects of program implementation. Federal Occupational Health Program office directory: <http://www.foh.dhhs.gov/whereweare/directory.asp>

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* This is not intended as an exhaustive list of all respirator manufacturers. The mention of any company in this list does not constitute an endorsement of the company or its products.