

**VOLUNTARY USE OF
FILTERING FACEPIECE RESPIRATORS
N95 RESPIRATORS**

EMPLOYER REQUIREMENTS

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Guidance on Voluntary Respirator Use

This guidance document provides a general summary of the requirements that an employee and their employer should follow to allow the employee to voluntarily wear a respirator in the workplace. Employers can utilize the following sample Voluntary Respirator Use Program.

Definitions

Air Purifying Respirators are a type of respirator that work by removing gases, vapors, aerosols (airborne droplets and solid particles), or a combination of contaminants from the air through the use of filters, cartridges, or canisters. These respirators do not supply oxygen from other than the working atmosphere, and therefore cannot be used in an atmosphere that is oxygen-deficient¹ or immediately dangerous to life or health² (IDLH). The appropriate respirator for a particular situation will depend on the environment and the contaminant.

Filtering Face Piece Respirators remove particles from the inhaled airstream of the wearer. They may be referred to as “N95 respirators”. They are also sometimes called disposable respirators because the entire respirator is discarded when it becomes unsuitable for further use because of hygiene, excessive resistance, or physical damage. FFRs are divided into classes based on their filtration capabilities. “N95” is a term referring to the N95 filter class, which removes at least 95% of airborne particles using a “most-penetrating” sized particle during “worst case” NIOSH testing.

Appendix D to 29 CFR 1910.134 Mandatory Information for Employees Using Respirators When Not Required Under the Standard provides information that employers must provide to employees regarding the voluntary use of respirators.

Procedures

Each employer must conduct a Hazard Assessment for hazardous airborne conditions, such as, but not limited to: an atmosphere with insufficient oxygen, chemical, biological (TB, COVID-19, etc.) or radiological contaminants or an exposure to chemicals without a known PEL.

If the hazard assessment determines that an employee is exposed to hazardous airborne conditions, the employer must remove these by removing the hazard or isolating the hazard. If the hazard may not be removed or isolated then the employer must utilize engineering controls or administrative controls. If these controls are not possible then the employer must provide employees with the appropriate PPE, training, medical evaluation and fit test as required by OSHA’s Respiratory Protection Program.

When respiratory protection is not required, an employee may request to voluntarily wear a disposable, N95 respirator. Voluntary use of a N95 respirator does not require enrollment in the Respiratory Protection Program. Individuals requesting to use a N95 respirator will be provided with *OSHA’s Appendix D to 29 CFR 1910.134 Mandatory Information for Employees Using Respirators When Not Required Under the Standard* and must acknowledge their decision to voluntarily use a N95 respirator and their understanding of the requirements associated with voluntary use by completing the attached Voluntary Respiratory Use Acknowledgement form.

Hazard Assessment

Is there a hazardous atmosphere in your workplace, which has? (check all that apply)

- Insufficient oxygen
- Harmful levels of chemical, biological, or radiological contaminants
- Employee will be working with a COVID-19 positive individual or PUI
- Known and reasonably foreseeable emergencies related to chemical hazards
- Unknown exposure levels or exposures to substances without an OSHA PEL

If you did not check any of the boxes above, the Respiratory Protection standard does not apply to your workplace. If you checked any of the boxes above, the Respiratory Protection standard may apply to your workplace.

OSHA requires use of the following methods to control the hazardous atmosphere(s) in your workplace:

Engineering controls, such as ventilation, isolation or enclosure of the work process, or substitution of non-hazardous materials for the materials that pose respiratory hazards; and

Administrative controls, such as worker rotation, or scheduling major maintenance for weekends or times when few workers are present. When engineering controls are not feasible, or while engineering controls are being installed or maintained, or whenever there is an emergency, appropriate respirators must be used.

Does your workplace have? (check the box to indicate yes, and check all that apply)

- Sufficient engineering controls to prevent illness or diseases caused by breathing hazardous air in the workplace
- Sufficient administrative controls to prevent illness
- Ability to isolate COVID-19 positive individuals or PUI

If you did not check all of the boxes above, the Respiratory Protection standard does apply to your workplace, and you must develop a written respiratory protection program that is specific to your workplace.

NOTE: The following document (MIOSHA) provides more guidance to help determine voluntary vs. required use

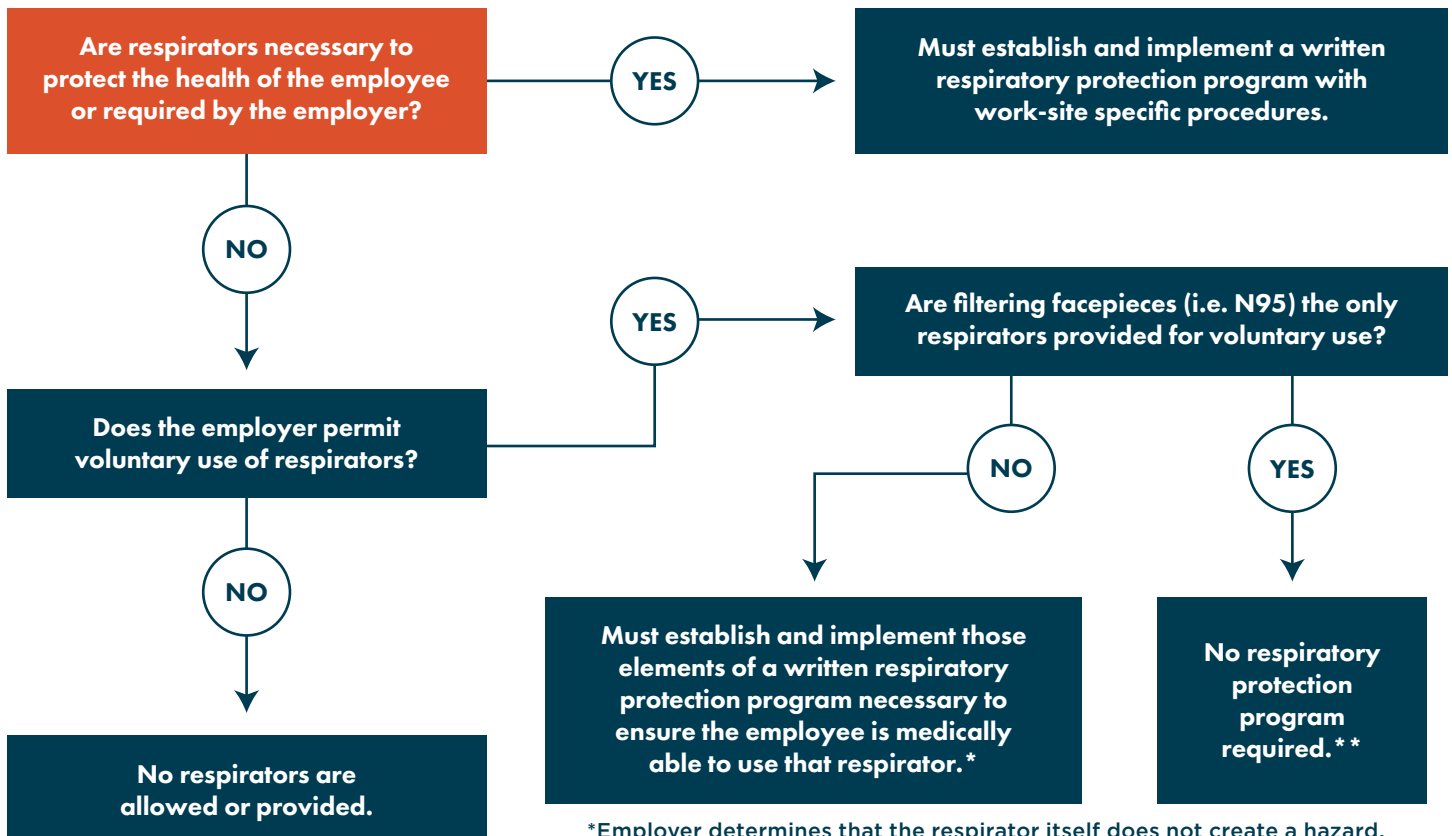
VOLUNTARY VS. REQUIRED RESPIRATOR USE

Appendix B

The employer determines the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) required for the job task(s). The employer is responsible for payment, replacement, maintenance, cleaning, laundering and disposal of PPE. Training should be provided to employees regarding proper use, limitations, care and maintenance of PPE. Where respirators are provided, the following table outlines additional requirements:

GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEES USING RESPIRATORY PROTECTION

Filtering Facepiece Respirator (i.e. N95)		
	Required Use	Voluntary Use
Fit Testing	Yes	No
Medical Evaluation	Yes	No
Facial Hair Prohibited	Yes	No
Appendix D Provided	No	Yes
Training per 1910.134(k)	Yes	No
Cleaning, Storage & Maintenance of Respirator	Yes	No



*Employer determines that the respirator itself does not create a hazard.
**Must provide users with information contained in [Appendix D](#).

Appendix D to Sec. 1910.134 (Mandatory) Information for Employees Using Respirators When Not Required Under the Standard

Respirators are an effective method of protection against designated hazards when properly selected and worn. Respirator use is encouraged, even when exposures are below the exposure limit, to provide an additional level of comfort and protection for workers. However, if a respirator is used improperly or not kept clean, the respirator itself can become a hazard to the worker. Sometimes, workers may wear respirators to avoid exposures to hazards, even if the amount of hazardous substance does not exceed the limits set by OSHA standards. If your employer provides respirators for your voluntary use, or if you provide your own respirator, you need to take certain precautions to be sure that the respirator itself does not present a hazard.

You should do the following:

1. Read and heed all instructions provided by the manufacturer on use, maintenance, cleaning and care, and warnings regarding the respirators' limitations.
2. Choose respirators certified for use to protect against the contaminant of concern. NIOSH, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, certifies respirators. A label or statement of certification should appear on the respirator or respirator packaging. It will tell you what the respirator is designed for and how much it will protect you.
3. Do not wear your respirator into atmospheres containing contaminants for which your respirator is not designed to protect against. For example, a respirator designed to filter dust particles will not protect you against gases, vapors, or very small solid particles of fumes or smoke.
4. Keep track of your respirator so that you do not mistakenly use someone else's respirator.

Voluntary Respirator Use Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I intend to voluntarily use a N95 respirator for activities at [INSERT COMPANY NAME] in accordance with the information and guidelines outlined in the Guidance for Voluntary Use of a Respirator. I will ensure that my voluntary use of a N95 respirator complies with all voluntary respirator use requirements and that Human Resources and my supervisor has been advised of my voluntarily use of a N95 respirator. I will ensure that if I perform activities which require respiratory protection and subsequent participation in the Protection Program, I will notify my supervisor.

Name: _____

Title: _____

Department: _____

Reason for Voluntary Respirator Use: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____