

SAFE USE OF RESPIRATORS UNDER THE OSHA COVID-19 ETS

Respirators can be an effective method of protection against COVID-19 hazards when properly selected and worn. Respirator use can provide an additional level of comfort and protection for workers even in circumstances that do not require a respirator to be used. However, if a respirator is used improperly or not kept clean, the respirator itself can become a hazard to the worker. OSHA's COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS) requires training for all employees who may wear a filtering facepiece respirator (e.g., N95) in circumstances where they are being worn for enhanced protection against COVID-19, in situations where only facemasks would be required by OSHA.

1910.504 – Mini Respiratory Protection Program (“mini RPP”)

- Applies when employees use respirators where only facemasks are required by OSHA.
- In contrast, OSHA's normal Respiratory Protection Standard (1910.134) applies whenever respirators are required by OSHA.

Why Is This Training Necessary?

- Wearing a respirator can, in and of itself, can present a hazard, such as:
 - Causing difficulty breathing when you have certain underlying medical conditions.
 - Causing a facial rash if the respirator has not been properly cleaned or stored.

In order to ensure that the respirator itself does not present a hazard, you need to take certain precautions:

1. Read and follow all instructions provided by the manufacturer on use, maintenance, cleaning and care, and **warnings regarding the respirator's limitations**.
2. Keep track of your respirator so that you do not mistakenly use someone else's respirator.
3. Do not wear your respirator where other workplace hazards (e.g., chemical exposures) require use of a respirator. In such cases, your employer must provide you with a respirator that is used in accordance with OSHA's Respiratory Protection Standard (1910.134).

Filtering Facepiece Respirators (FFR)

Filtering facepiece respirators, **referred to as “FFRs,”** are disposable respirators, normally intended for single-use. They protect you by filtering particles, such as COVID-19 particles, out of the air as you breathe. N95s are the most commonly used FFRs.

Fit Testing

- A fit test evaluates the fit of a tight-fitting respirator to an individual's face.
 - It verifies that you have found a make, model, and size of respirator that fits to your face.
 - Much like finding a style and size of shoe that fits your foot properly.
 - Fit testing is required under the normal RPP.
- Fit testing is **not** required under the mini RPP.
 - Without a fit test, there is less control over whether employees are receiving the full, expected level of protection that a respirator is capable of providing. Therefore, a user seal check is required each time you put on your respirator.

User Seal Checks

- A user seal check determines whether a tight-fitting respirator has properly sealed to your face once it has been put on.
- A user seal check must be conducted each time you put on a respirator.
- Two types of user seal checks:
 - Positive pressure user seal check - the respirator user exhales.
 - Negative pressure user seal check - the respirator user inhales.

To conduct a positive pressure user seal check for a FFR:

1. Once you have conducted proper hand hygiene and properly donned the respirator, place your hands over the facepiece, covering as much surface area as possible.
2. Exhale gently into the facepiece.
3. The face fit is considered satisfactory if a slight positive pressure is being built up inside the facepiece without any evidence of outward leakage of air at the seal. Examples of evidence that it is leaking could be:
 - The feeling of air movement on your face along the seal of the facepiece.
 - Fogging of your glasses.
 - A lack of pressure being built up inside the facepiece.

To conduct a negative pressure user seal check:

1. Once you have conducted proper hand hygiene and properly donned the respirator, cover the filter surface with your hands as much as possible and then inhale.
2. The facepiece should collapse on the wearer's face and should not feel air passing between the face and facepiece.

How To Put On And Remove a FFR

Review OSHA's "Seven Steps to Correctly Wear a Respirator at Work" on the following page. Additionally, you can watch a [video](#) depicting these steps.

Medical Signs and Symptoms

Medical evaluation, to determine if an employee is medically fit to use a respirator, is required under the normal RPP, but **not** under the mini RPP. However, it is important to recognize signs and symptoms that could impair your ability to wear/continue to wear a respirator. These include: shortness of breath, coughing, wheezing, chest pain, or any other symptoms related to lung problems or cardiovascular symptoms. Discontinue respirator use immediately and notify your supervisor if you experience any of these conditions while wearing a respirator.

Inspection, Storage and Reuse of FFRs/N95s

Inspect a FFR before each use. Check for damage to the filter, straps, and seal.

The reuse of single-use FFRs is discouraged. However, if an FFR is to be reused, it must only be reused by the employee it was provided to and only under the following conditions:

- The respirator is not visibly soiled or damaged;
- The respirator has been stored in a breathable storage container (e.g., paper bag) for at least 5 calendar days between use and has been kept away from water or moisture;
- The employee does a visual check in adequate lighting for damage to the respirator's fabric or seal;
- The employee successfully completes a user seal check;
- The employee uses proper hand hygiene before putting the respirator on and conducting the user seal check; and
- The respirator has not been worn more than five days total.

Questions

Questions on this training or use of N95s under this ETS should be directed to ehs@yale.edu.

Training Credit

To receive credit for this training, please complete [quiz](#).

Seven Steps to Correctly Wear a Respirator at Work

Following these simple steps will help you properly put on and take off your respirator, and keep you and everyone else safe.

1 Wash Your Hands



Wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60% alcohol.

2 Inspect the Respirator



Inspect the respirator for damage. If it appears damaged or damp, do not use it.

3 Put on the Respirator



Cup the respirator in your hand with the nosepiece at your fingertips and the straps hanging below your hand.



Cover your mouth and nose with the respirator and make sure there are no gaps (e.g., facial hair, hair, and glasses) between your face and the respirator.



Place the strap over your head and rest at the top back of your head. If you have a second strap, place the bottom strap around your neck and below your ears. Do not crisscross straps.



If your respirator has a metal nose clip, use your fingertips from both hands to mold the nose area to the shape of your nose.

4 Adjust the Respirator



Place both hands over the respirator. Inhale quickly and then exhale. If you feel leakage from the nose, readjust the nosepiece; if leakage from the respirator edges, readjust the straps.



Repeat until you get a proper seal. If you can't get a proper seal, try another respirator.



Avoid touching the respirator while using it. **If you do, wash your hands.**

Note: If you reuse your respirator, wear gloves when inspecting and putting on the respirator. Avoid touching your face (including your eyes, nose, and mouth) during the process.

6 Remove the Respirator



Wash your hands.



Remove the respirator from behind. Do not touch the front.



If the respirator does not need to be reused because of supply shortages, discard it in a closed-bin waste receptacle. Wash your hands.

For more information, see the quick video, "Putting On and Taking Off a Mask". ▶

