

VOLUNTARY RESPIRATOR USE AT WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY

GENERAL INFORMATION

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.

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 supervisor provides respirators for your voluntary use for “comfort” reasons (as opposed to a documented hazard), 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.**

All respirators place a burden on the wearer. Employees who have a history of respiratory or heart problems, or feel they may have such problems, should discuss respirator use with their physician.

WHAT IS VOLUNTARY USE?

Voluntary use is defined as the employee’s decision to use a respirator for “comfort” when no hazard exists that requires use of a respirator and the use of the respirator does not produce any additional hazard. At the University, the only acceptable respirator for voluntary use is the filtering facepiece respirator. Use of any other type of respirator, for example, a ½ face elastomeric respirator with cartridges requires full compliance with the [University’s Respirator Policy](#).

WHAT IS A FILTERING FACEPIECE RESPIRATOR?

Filtering Facepiece Respirators (also called dust masks) are considered true respirators according to OSHA. The N95 respirator is the most common type of filtering facepiece respirator. The N95 letter and numeric combination refers to the NIOSH definition of the filter media that comprises the facepiece. N means that it is not oil resistant and 95 refers to it being 95% effective at filtering a sodium chloride aerosol at the 0.3 micron level. Other classifications of NIOSH-certified filtering facepiece respirators include R95, P95, N100 and P100. Use of NIOSH-approved respirators is strongly recommended for voluntary use, but it is not an OSHA requirement.

IF YOU WANT TO VOLUNTARILY WEAR A RESPIRATOR YOU **MUST**

Obtain permission from your supervisor, complete required forms, and obtain approval from the Department of Environmental Health and Safety.

Provide the following information:

- Your job function and title
- Your department, building, and supervisor
- Your respirator information including manufacturer, type, size, and frequency of use
- The air contaminant(s) to be protected

Read and understand the information regarding voluntary use of respirators.

Have received a copy or the location of the [University’s Respirator Policy](#).

Receive basic information on respirators as provided in Appendix D of OSHA’s Respiratory Standard, 1910.134. **Completion of Wright State University’s Voluntary Respiratory Form D certifies receipt of Appendix D to 1910.134, as required by OSHA.** Return the completed Wright State University’s Voluntary Respiratory Form D to EHS Office, located in 047 BSII.

AS A VOLUNTARY USE RESPIRATOR USER, YOU **MUST**:

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.

HOW TO USE AND WEAR A FILTERING FACEPIECE RESPIRATOR

Inspect respirators prior to use, including new units out of the box. Check for rips and tears. Make sure straps are securely attached, nose piece is attached properly, and that no obvious defects exist.

Proper use of the respirator is important. Without it, the respirator is ineffective against the workplace contaminates. Follow manufacturers' instructions for use.

Beards and other facial hair negate the effectiveness of the respirator because they prevent an adequate seal between the respirator and the face. Skin afflictions, such as dermatitis, or scars, could affect the ability to produce a seal.

[User seal checks](#) confirm that an adequate seal with the face is achieved when the mask is applied. User seal checks should be done every time the mask is put on and every time it is re-adjusted on the face.

Report any problems or concerns to your supervisor.

LIMITATIONS OF FILTERING FACEPIECE RESPIRATORS

Filtering facepiece respirators are only useful for protection against particulates. *They are **not to be used** in oxygen-deficient atmospheres or atmospheres that contain hazards that are immediately dangerous to life and health (IDLH) or for protection against hazardous dusts, gases or vapors.* Odors will still be noted when using the respirator because it does not filter out gases or vapors. The respirator will not provide adequate protection if a good seal with the face is not achieved.

CARE, MAINTENANCE, USEFUL LIFE AND DISPOSAL OF FILTERING FACEPIECE RESPIRATORS

Filtering Facepiece Respirators are considered disposable personal protective equipment (PPE). They cannot be cleaned, especially when they become wet or soiled. They cannot be shared with other employees.

New respirators should be stored in a clean, dry location (such as a Ziploc bag), protected from sunlight, chemicals, water, and physical damage.

Respirators can only be used in conjunction with a written respiratory protection program. The University's Written Respiratory Protection Policy can be found at

<https://www.wright.edu/sites/default/files/page/attachements/RespiratoryProtectionPoilcy.pdf>

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Read the Wright State University Respiratory Protection Policy.

If you have questions concerning respirators, respirator use, or to schedule a fit test, please contact Denise Kramer at 775-2623 or the EHS Office at 775-2215