



MONTGOMERY COLLEGE STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Last Modified: 06/01/0223

Last Reviewed: 08/05/2020

Approved: Chevelle Glymph

Subject Directions for Respiratory Protection

INTENDED AUDIENCE: All Campuses, All Departments

PURPOSE: To provide guidance to Montgomery College Departments on respiratory protection requirements.

DEFINITIONS

Masks: Masks generally refer to surgical type masks, or procedure masks. They are intended for prevention of droplet contamination during medical procedures. Personnel are not fit tested for masks.

Face Covering: A cloth face covering is a material that covers the nose and mouth. It can be secured to the head with ties or straps or simply wrapped around the lower face. It can be made of a variety of materials such as: cotton, silk, or linen. A cloth face covering may be factory-made or sewn by hand, or it can be improvised from household items such as scarfs, T-shirts, sweatshirts, or towels. They are not tested but it is generally believed that face coverings prevent the spread of droplets from coughing or sneezing.

Respirators: Respirators are respiratory protection approved by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

Filtering Face Piece: A NIOSH approved respirator made of disposable materials that is one-time use only. A negative pressure particulate respirator with a filter as an integral part of the facepiece or with the entire facepiece composed of the filtering medium. The most common type of Filtering Facepiece respirator used by healthcare workers is the N95 mask. N95 is a NIOSH rating, not a brand of style.

Half-Face Respirator: It is a tight-fitting, air-purifying respirator with replaceable filters (for particulates) or cartridges or canisters (for gases and vapors). In either case, these are attached to a rubber or silicone facepiece that covers the nose and mouth. This type of respirator can be used instead of a filtering facepiece respirator. Employee using this needs to be fit tested every year. A medical evaluation is also required before wearing this respirator.

Full-Face Respirator: This type of respirator provides a higher level of protection than a half-Facepiece respirator because it has a better seal around the face. Since it covers the user's eyes and face, it can also be used to protect against liquid splashes and irritating vapors. This respirator is a tight-fitting, air-purifying respirator with replaceable filters or cartridges attached to a rubber or silicone facepiece. Employee using this needs to be fit tested every



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year. A medical evaluation is also required before using this respirator.

Assigned Protection Factor (APF): means the workplace level of respiratory protection that a respirator or class of respirators is expected to provide to employees when the employer implements a continuing, effective respiratory protection program as specified by this section.

Canister or Cartridge: A container with a filter, sorbent, or catalyst, or combination of these items, which removes specific contaminants from the air passed through the container.

Air-purifying respirator: A respirator with an air-purifying filter, cartridge, or canister that removes specific air contaminants by passing ambient air through the air-purifying element.

Fit Test: The use of a protocol to qualitatively or quantitatively evaluate the fit of a respirator on an individual.

Supplied-air respirator (SAR): An atmosphere-supplying respirator for which the source of breathing air is not designed to be carried by the user.

Voluntary Use: use for employee comfort purposes only. No hazard exists that requires the use of a respirator and the use of the respirator does not produce any additional hazard.

NOTE: According to OSHA's COVID-19 guidance, employees in higher education are in the Lower Risk category and require only face coverings in accordance with the State and County Health Department advisories. The determination of whether respirator is required is made by the Public Health & Environmental Safety (PHES) Office along with the employee's supervisor.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Public Health & Environmental Safety (PHES)

- If an employee and/or supervisor believes that a task requires respiratory protection they must contact PHES for assessment. There are different types of respirators for different tasks, and contaminant. No single respirator protects against all contaminants. A Job Hazard Analysis is performed, along with an Exposure Assessment which may include personal air monitoring.



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- Employees are protected from respiratory hazards through engineering controls that are part of the building ventilation system. For example, fume hoods and portable exhaust in labs; local exhaust in art studios and shop areas.
- Public Health & Environmental Safety will determine if there is a need for a respiratory protection program. It is the responsibility of the department to purchase appropriate respirators for the department.
- PHES will recommend to the department supervisor in writing which employees, if any be included in the Respiratory Protection Program.

Department Supervisor

- The department supervisor is responsible for implementing the Respiratory Protection Program for his/her department. For a respiratory protection program to be effective, a cooperative effort between the department, the employee and PHES must occur.
- Purchasing approved respirators, filters and supplies associated with respirator use and maintenance for the department.
- Send employees for initial medical assessment and respirator fit testing annually for the respirator utilized.

Employees

- Attend all training required
- Maintain facial hair requirements to complete fit test. (*see References: CDC Facial Hair and Respirators*)
- If corrective lenses are required, must ensure their eyeglass frames do not interfere with their respirator seal. If an employee is unable to wear their eyeglasses with a half-face respirator, a full-face respirator will be utilized instead with appropriate spectacle kit. Eyeglasses with temple bars cannot be worn with full face respirators.

PROCEDURE

1. Public Health & Environmental Safety (PHES) will determine if specific jobs or activities require the use of respiratory protection. Upon request from the department, PHES will review a job/activity in the department.
2. Air/personal monitoring in accordance with accepted industrial hygiene practices, may be performed to evaluate a work area or a particular activity. Monitoring will help identify those areas or activities which require



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engineering controls, administrative controls, or, if those are not feasible, respiratory protection.

3. When it has been determined that use of a respirator is required, a medical evaluation will be used to ensure the respirator in itself will not create a hazard for the employee. Once the employee is cleared to use a respirator, the employee must read and acknowledge the OSHA and other relevant information for respirator use.
4. When it has been determined that the use of a respirator is required, respirator selection will be determined by PHES. Public Health & Environmental Safety must approve the selection of the respirators type and brand, make model, and even if it is owned by the employee and used voluntarily.
5. PHES will recommend to the department supervisor in writing which employees, if any, be included in the Respiratory Protection Program once medical evaluation and fit testing are completed. Written records for all respirators must be maintained. An inventory of all respirators owned by the department, the reasons (hazards/activities) for each respirator, and the NIOSH certificate number for each respirator. A completed copy will be kept by the department and PHES. [See DEPARTMENT RESPIRATOR INVENTORY FORM](#)

Medical Assessment of Employee Health

Using a respirator may place a physiological burden on employees that can vary with the type of respirator worn, the job and workplace conditions in which the respirator is used, and the medical status of the employee. After it is determined that respiratory protection is necessary:

- A. A physician must evaluate the employee. The physician, through a medical history and a physical, will determine if the employee's health allows him or her to wear a respirator. [See OSHA MEDICAL QUESTIONNAIRE.](#)
- B. The results (pass/fail/conditions of use) of the medical evaluation will be reported to PHES, which will inform the department supervisor.
- C. Physical examination will be conducted annually for all employees who are required to wear respirators. Those who voluntarily choose to use a N95 or Filtering Face piece respirator will be advised that proper medical examination and fit testing are

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essential to the proper functioning of the respirator but will not be mandatory. Voluntary use of any other respirators such as half-face, full-face, PAPR, SCBA requires medical exam and fit testing.

Fit Testing Procedures

1. Before any employee may be required to use a respirator with a negative or positive tight-fitting face-piece, the employee must be fit tested with the same make, model, style, and size respirator that will be used. This applies to all tight- fitting respirators, including air purifying and SCBA.

2. Fit testing will be repeated on an annual basis and usually on the day of the annual physical for all employees required to use a respirator and for any other employees who wish to have it. [See OSHA MANDATED FIT TESTING PROCEDURES](#)

Employee Training

For tasks that require the use of a respirator, employees will not be permitted to work with a respirator until he or she has received training in respiratory protection. The training will be provided by Public Health & Environmental Safety and will cover the following topics:

- Explanation of the hazard and what would happen if respiratory protection was not used.

- Elements of the Respiratory Protection Program and the employee's responsibility.

- The purpose of the fit test and medical evaluation requirements.

- Function, capabilities and limitations of the selected respiratory protection.

- Explanation of the operation of the respirator protection, including how to don, check the fit, and wear the respirator properly.

- Respirator maintenance including cleaning, inspection and storage.

- Recognition and handling of emergency situations.



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REFERENCES

- [OSHA Respirator Protection Standard 29 CFR 1910.134](#)
- [OSHA Appendix D "Information for Voluntary Respirator Use"](#)
- [OSHA Medical Questionnaire](#)
- [OSHA Mandated Fit Testing Procedures](#)
- [OSHA Mandatory Respirator Cleaning](#)
- [OSHA Mandatory Respirator User Seal Check](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions About Respirator Seal Checks](#)
- [Donning and Doffing of Personal Protective Equipment](#)
- [Seven Steps to Correctly Wear a Respirator at Work \(OSHA\)](#)
- [CDC Facial Hair and Respirators](#)
- [How to Perform a Respirator Seal Check](#)