



Respirators

EPIC Fact Sheet

What you need to know if you are requiring employees to wear a respirator (N95, ½ APR, Full Face APR)

Each year, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) releases a preliminary list of the 10 most frequently cited safety and health violations for the fiscal year. The list is compiled from thousands of workplace inspections conducted by federal OSHA staff. Year after year, one of the top 10 cited violations involves respiratory protection.

OSHA reports that an estimated 5 million workers are required to wear respirators in 1.3 million workplaces throughout the United States. Respirators can protect workers against insufficient oxygen environments, harmful dusts, fogs, smokes, mists, gases, vapors and sprays. These hazards may cause cancer, lung impairment, diseases or death.

OSHA states that respirators protect the user in two basic ways. The first is by the removal of contaminants from the air. Respirators of this type include particulate respirators, which filter out airborne particles, and air-purifying respirators with cartridges/canisters which filter out chemicals and gases. The second way is to deliver clean respirable air from another source. Respirators that fall into this category include airline respirators, which use compressed air from a remote source, and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), which include their own air supply.

Compliance with the OSHA Respiratory Protection Standard could avert many deaths and countless illnesses annually. The Standard applies to all occupational airborne exposures to contaminated air where the employee is:

- Exposed to a hazardous level of an airborne contaminant; or
- Required by the employer to wear respirators; or
- Permitted to wear respirators.

Four major duties are imposed by each of these standards. They include:

- Using engineering controls where feasible to control the hazard.

The Disaster Ready Emergency Preparedness Infection Control (DR EPIC) program provides education and technical assistance for skilled nursing providers throughout the state. Individual providers will need to exercise their independent discretion in how to apply this information and technical assistance to the unique operation of each facility. For that reason, a facility's exercise of its professional judgment and due diligence in utilizing the program for infection control and risk management practices is solely within the facility's control for which it is entirely responsible.

- Providing an appropriate respirator.
- Ensuring the use of an appropriate respirator.
- Instituting a respiratory protection program that complies with the rest of the standard.

In brief, if an employer is requiring an employee to wear any respirator (e.g N95, ½ face APR, Full Face APR, etc.) the employer must:

- Provide the equipment
- Have a written respiratory protection program (RPP)
- Ensure a medical evaluation has been conducted, and the employee is cleared to wear a respirator before it is worn.
 - There is not a specific annual requirement for medical evaluations in the standard, but this is commonly prescribed.
- Ensure respirator training and a fit test has been conducted using the respirator (make, model, size) the employee will wear and that the fit test is passed.
 - Fit tests and training are to be repeated annually, when changing respirator type or if the employee has had significant physical changes (weigh loss/gain, broken nose, etc.)

Additional resources;

- [US Department of Labor OSHA Video titled “Respirator Fit Testing” issued Feb 7, 2012](#)
- [US Department of Labor OSHA Video titled “The Difference Between Respirators and Surgical Masks” issued December 16, 2009](#)
- [US Department of Labor OSHA Video titled “Respirator Safety” issued Dec 16, 2009](#)
- [Providers can go right to the standard OSHA 1910.134 - Respiratory Protection Standard](#)
- [OSHA 1910.134 - Respiratory Protection.](#)
- [IAQTV video on Respiratory Protection for Workers](#)
- [US Department of Labor OSHA Video titled “Respirator Fit Testing” issued Feb 7, 2012](#)
- [US Department of Labor OSHA Video titled “The Difference Between Respirators and Surgical Masks” issued Dec 16, 2009](#)
- [US Department of Labor OSHA Video titled “Respirator Safety” issued Dec 16, 2009](#)
- [Case Study: U.S. Department of Labor Cites Ohio Nursing Facilities for Failing to Fully Implement Respiratory Programs to Protect Employees from Coronavirus](#)
- [Respirators and Masks, EPIC Video](#)

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If you have additional questions: Leave a message on the Disaster Ready Emergency Preparedness Infection Control (EPIC) Helpline at 602-241-4644, or email EPIC@azhca.org, or visit the website at epic.disasterreadyaz.org

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