



POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL CENTRAL VALLEY HEALTH DISTRICT

SECTION: NURSING

POLICY#:440 RESPIRATOR PROTECTION

Policy: The purpose of this respiratory protection policy is to ensure that all employees required to wear respiratory protection as a condition of their employment are protected from respiratory hazards through the proper use of respirators.

Policy Administration

The Public Health Administrator and the Respirator Program Administrator (RPA) are responsible for the administration of this policy and for monitoring the ongoing and changing needs for respiratory protection. The RPA is appointed by the Public Health Administrator.

Scope and Application

This policy applies to all employees who could potentially be exposed to airborne respiratory illnesses during normal work operations and during non-routine or emergency situations. Some types of work activities required to wear respirators are outlined in the table below:

Work Process	Location	Type of Respirator
Contact tracing/disease investigation requiring airborne precautions	Community Settings	N95 – disposable
Client contact/care requiring airborne precautions	Community Setting, Homes, Clinics	N95 – disposable

In addition to Public Health employees, this policy applies to any volunteer(s) who may be called to serve during a public health emergency.

Identifying Work Hazards

The respirators selected will be used for respiratory protection from potentially airborne infectious diseases; they do not provide protection from chemical exposure. Examples of potentially airborne infectious diseases that Public Health employees may be exposed to in normal working conditions or public health emergency situations are TB (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis*), chickenpox, measles, SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), *Yersinia enterocolitica* gastroenteritis in immuno-compromised people and smallpox. Until more is known about Avian flu transmission, respirator precautions will be used.



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Respirator Selection

Only respirators approved by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) will be selected and used. N95 fit tested respirators are the respirators of choice.

- N95 respirators are available for contact tracing, disease investigation and patient investigation and patient contact/care. (*Airborne Precautions*)

Medical Evaluation:

Employees assigned to tasks that require respiratory protection must be physically able to perform the task while wearing a respirator.

The Public Health Administrator and the CVHD Health officer will determine individual medical clearance by a medical questionnaire based on Appendix C to 29 CFR 1910.134. (The Medical Respirator Evaluation form is at attachment 1.) Individuals answering "yes" to any of the questions regarding medical history or review of systems on the Particulate Respirator Medical Evaluation form will need to contact their personal healthcare provider for written medical clearance. Employees, who have not gone through the respiratory protection fit testing are without medical clearance, or refuse a medical evaluation, will not be allowed to work in conditions requiring respirator use.

Medical Re-evaluation will be conducted under these circumstances:

- Employee reports physical symptoms that are related to the ability to use a respirator (i.e. wheezing, shortness of breath, chest pain, etc.)
- Identification of an employee having a medical problem during respirator use.
- Employee facial size/shape/structure has changed significantly.
- A change occurs in the workplace conditions that may result in an increased physiological burden on the employee.
- The healthcare professional performing the evaluation determines an employee needs to be reevaluated and the frequency of the evaluation.

The particulate Respirator Medical Evaluation form, medical clearance or denial, examinations or any correspondence related to respiratory protection will be maintained as confidential medical information.

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Respirator Training:

Workers will be trained prior to the use of a respirator and reviewed annually as deemed necessary by the Respirator Program Administrator. Training of the N-95 respirator will be accomplished by using 3M's training instruction on CD and supplemented with hands on demonstration.

- Training will include:
 1. Identify hazards, potential exposure to these hazards, and health effects of hazards.
 2. Respirator fit, improper fit, usage, limitations, and capabilities for maintenance, usage, cleaning, and storage.
 3. Emergency use if applicable.
 4. Inspecting, donning, removal, seal check and trouble shooting.
 5. Explaining respirator program (policies, procedures, OSHA standard, resources).

Fit Testing:

After an initial fit test by a competent respirator fit tester, fit tests must be completed at least annually or more frequently if there is a change in status of the wearer, or if the employer changes model or type of respiratory protection. The OSHA Respiratory Protection Standard 29 CFR 1910.134 applies to health care workers. This policy will be changed to reflect the most current OSHA regulations as new information becomes available.

Fit testing is conducted to determine that the respirator fits the user adequately and that a good seal can be obtained. Respirators that do not seal do not offer adequate protection. The primary fit testing method for the N-95 respirator shall be quantitative using the Portacount machine. However, if no Portacount is available or time constraints require, qualitative fit testing may be used to expedite fit tests. Refer to the attachment 2 for Portacount's instructions.

- Fit tests will be conducted:
 1. Prior to being allowed to wear any respirator.
 2. If CVHD changes respirator product.
 3. If employee changes weight by 10% or more.
 4. If employee has changes in facial structure or scarring.
 5. As Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards require.

Proper Respirator Use

General Use:

- Employees will use their respirators under conditions specified by this policy and in accordance with the training they receive on the use of the selected model(s). In addition, the respirator shall not be used in any manner for which it is not certified by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) or by its manufacturer.

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- All employees shall conduct positive and negative pressure user seal checks each time they wear a respirator.
- All employees shall leave a potentially contaminated work area to change their respirator if the respirator is impeding their ability to work.

Cleaning and Disinfecting:

N-95 – disposable:

- If labeled disposable N95 respirators, there is no cleaning or disinfecting, just discarding in red biohazard bag.
- If patient is not in Contact Precautions (e.g., TB), discard if soiled, if breathing becomes labored, or if structural integrity is compromised, the respirator is replaced with a new one.
- If patient in Airborne Precautions is also in Contact Precautions (e.g., SARS, smallpox), discard after use in red biohazard bag.
- During a pandemic flu, respiratory change frequency may change.

Inspecting, Maintenance and Repairs:

All types of respirators should be inspected prior to use.

N95 – disposable:

- Examine the face piece of the disposable respirator to determine if it has structural integrity. Discard if there are nicks, abrasions, cuts, or creases in seal area or if the filter material is physically damaged or soiled.
- Check the respirator straps to be sure they are not cut or otherwise damaged.
- Make sure the metal nose clip is in place and functions properly
- Disposable respirators are discarded after use into a red biohazard bag, are not reused or stored.

Evaluating/Updating Program:

- The Public Health Administrator and the Respirator Program Administrator will regularly evaluate the respiratory protection policy and update as necessary.

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- Evaluation of any feedback information or surveys will be examined.
- The Public Health Administrator and the Respirator Program Administrator will review of any new hazards or changes in policy that would require respirator use.
- The Respirator Program Administrator will make recommendations to the Public Health Administrator for any changes needed in the respiratory protection program.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Respirator Program Administrator is responsible for the administration, monitoring and changing needs of the respiratory protection policy.

- Duties and responsibilities include:
 1. Identify work areas, processes, or tasks that require respiratory protection.
 2. Monitor OSHA policy and standards for changes and make changes to agency's policy
 3. Recommend and select respiratory protection products.
 4. Monitor respirator use to ensure that respirators are used in accordance with their certification.
 5. Distribute and evaluate education/medical questionnaire.
 6. In conjunction with the Public Health Administrator, evaluate any feedback information or surveys.
 7. Arrange for and/or conduct training and fit testing for all employees.
 8. Ensure proper storage and maintenance of respiratory protection equipment.

The Public Health Administrator, the Respirator Program Administrator and Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that the respiratory policy is implemented in their particular division.

In addition to being knowledgeable about the program requirements for their own protection, division supervisors must also ensure that the program is understood and followed by the employees under their charge.

Duties of the supervisors include:

- Knowing the hazards in the area in which they and their staff work.
- Knowing types of respirators that need to be used.
- Ensuring the respirator program and worksite procedures are followed.
- Enforcing/encouraging staff to use required respirators.
- Ensuring employees receive training and medical evaluations.



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- Coordinating annual retraining and/or fit testing.
- Notifying supervisor with any problems with respirator use, or changes in work processes that would impact airborne contaminant levels.
- Ensure proper storage and maintenance of all respirators.

Employee:

- Participate in all training.
- Know the type of respirators that they need to use.
- Wear respirator when indicated.
- Report malfunctions or concerns the Respirator Program Administrator.

Documentation and Record-keeping:

The Public Health Administrator will maintain the medical information for all employees covered under the respiratory program and provide a written report of those employees who are medically approved to the RPA for fit testing. The completed medical forms and documented medical recommendations are confidential medical records. All relevant medical information must be maintained for the duration of the employment of the individual plus thirty years.

The Respirator Program Administrator will maintain records of respiratory training and fit tests. Fit test records shall be retained for respiratory users until the next fit is administered.

Attachments:

1. Medical Evaluation Form
2. Portacount Instructions

References:

1. US Department of Labor: *The Occupational Safety and health Administration, 29CFR1910.134 (Respiratory Protection)*. (2008).
http://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=127
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2. NIOSH Respiratory Protection Program: *TB Respiratory Protection Program In Health Care Facilities, Administrator's Guide*. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/99-143.html>