

N95 Respirator Guidance Sheet

N95 respirators are in short supply and must be reserved for personnel with very high or high occupational exposure risk to COVID-19. Employees in this risk level may include health care providers, emergency first responders, and select personnel who are required to enter a COVID-19 restricted area on campus.

Example	N95 Respirator Type
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) • Tight-fitting respirator that forms a complete seal to the face. • The N95 is also referred to as a dust mask or filtering facepiece respirator. • Filters out at least 95% of large and very small (0.3 micron) particles, including viruses and bacteria.
	<p>Exhalation Valves</p> <p>Exhalation valves may be beneficial for dissipating humidity, heat, and carbon dioxide from the breathing zone beneath the respirator but they should NOT be used to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The exhalation valve allows unfiltered exhaled air to escape into the surrounding area, so if an infected person is wearing the respirator, their breath escaping the exhalation valve will spread the SARS-CoV-2 virus to others!</p>
<p>Respiratory Protection Offered</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides respiratory protection for the wearer from aerosols or fine particles. • In a healthcare setting, protects from exposure to biohazards including viruses and bacteria and provides a barrier to splashes, droplets, and sprays. • Protects other people in the surrounding area from respiratory droplets if the wearer is infected with the virus. 	
<p>Regulatory Requirements</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to OSHA Personal Protective Equipment Standard 29 CFR 1910.132 and OSHA Respiratory Protection Standard 29 CFR 1910.134. • Work that <u>requires</u> the use of a respirator (i.e. N95) also mandates that the worker be enrolled in WCU's Respiratory Protection Program and receive a medical evaluation, fit testing, and annual respirator training as required by law. • Employees required to use the N95 must follow the fit-testing protocol and remain clean shaven (no facial hair or stubble) when wearing the respirator. • A seal check must be performed by the user each time the respirator is worn. 	

Counterfeit Respirators

- The N95 must be NIOSH approved for required respirator use. The NIOSH approval number and approval label are found within the packaging or on the respirator itself. Required labeling includes the name NIOSH, approval number, filter designations, lot number, and model number. An example of typical markings on approved filtering facepiece respirators is available on the [NIOSH – Approved Respirators](#) webpage.
- Review the CDC list of **Counterfeit Respirators** before purchasing.
- Respirators that are not NIOSH approved are not appropriate for use in WCU's Respiratory Protection Program and cannot be used by personnel identified as higher risk for COVID-19 exposure or when respiratory protection is required based on a job analysis risk assessment.
- Non-NIOSH masks can be used as a face covering when social distancing is not possible and the employee is not required to use a respirator. An example of a non-approved mask is the **KN95** respirator from China.

Proper Use of the N95 Respirator

- Wash hands thoroughly or apply hand sanitizer and rub until dry.
- Visually inspect the respirator prior to use. Over time components can degrade which can affect the quality of the fit and seal. If the respirator is damaged in any way, DO NOT use it.
- Follow proper donning and doffing procedures and perform a user seal check with each use.
- Watch the video to review the proper procedure for donning and doffing the N95 respirator and performing a user seal check. **OSHA Video: Putting on and Taking off a Mask Correctly**

Maintenance and Care of the Respirator

- It is important to follow proper care and maintenance procedures provided by the manufacturer to safely reuse PPE and optimize the supply.
- N95 Respirators must be discarded if soiled, contaminated, damaged, or difficult to breathe through.
- N95 respirators can be reused in limited circumstances if taken care of properly. Remove the mask following proper doffing procedures and store in a clean container labeled with the user's name. Don't seal the container and allow air to circulate.

Resources:

[CDC: The National Personal Protective Technology Laboratory \(NPPTL\)](#)