

N-95 Respirator

Voluntary Use Training



N-95 Filtering facepiece respirators are air-purifying respirators certified by NIOSH to have filter efficiency levels of 95% or greater. N-95 respirators filter out airborne contaminants including dusts, fumes, mists, and microbial agents such as tuberculosis bacteria & flu virus.

How to put on N-95 Respirators



1. Read instructions. Wash your hands. Hold the respirator in one hand, with nosepiece at your fingertips. Let the straps hang loosely.

2. Place respirator under your chin, with the nosepiece up. Hold the respirator with one hand and **pull the top strap over your head.** Rest it on top of head.

3. Pull the bottom strap over your head and place it around your neck, below your ears.

4. Use both hands to **mold the nosepiece** to the shape of your nose by pushing inward with your fingertips. Check for secure fit.

5. Seal check. Cover respirator completely with hands and exhale sharply. If air blows on your face, readjust respirator (steps 3 & 4).

Note: The proper way to put on a respirator depends on the type and model of the respirator. Refer to the manufacturer's instructions.

Proper Use & Maintenance

- Choose N-95 respirators **certified for use** to protect against the contaminant of concern.
- **Read & follow instructions** from the manufacturer.
- Check for a **tight seal** around the face every time you put the respirator on. The more air leaks under the seal, the less protection you receive.
- **Keep track** of your respirator as to not mistakenly use someone else's.
- **Inspect** the respirator prior to use; **check for damage** and contamination.
- **Replace** your respirator if it becomes damaged, deformed, dirty, or difficult to breathe through.
- **Inform** your supervisor and **work with EHS&RM** if you have medical concerns that may result in difficulties when using a respirator. You may also **consult with your doctor** before using a respirator if you have any medical concerns such as lung or heart problems.
- Go to an area with cleaner air, take off the respirator, and **seek medical help**, if you experience symptoms (i.e. difficulty breathing, dizziness, or nausea).
- **Dispose of the respirator** in the normal trash, unless it was used in a medical facility or research area with specific disposal procedures, or if there is evidence it may be contaminated.



- **Store** your respirator properly to protect it from damage, contamination, extreme temperatures, damaging chemicals, and crushing or deforming the facepiece.
- **DO NOT** use surgical masks or other items over your nose and mouth (i.e. scarves, T-shirts, bandannas) in lieu of an N-95 respirator.
- **DO NOT** wear your respirator into atmospheres containing contaminants for which it is not designed to protect against. For example, a respirator designed to filter dust particles will not protect you against gases, vapors, or highly toxic materials.
- **DO NOT** attempt to reuse, clean, or disinfect disposable filtering facepiece respirators.
- **DO NOT** allow facial hair, hair, jewelry, glasses, clothing, or anything else to prevent proper placement or come between your face and the respirator.



Required Use

N-95 respirators may be **required** as personal protective equipment, depending on your job responsibilities. If your use of an N-95 respirator is not considered voluntary and you are required to wear an N-95 respirator as part of your job, work with your supervisor and EHS&RM to ensure you have received proper [training, fit testing and medical clearance](#).

Limitations

Review and follow instructions from the manufacturer on the respirator's use, maintenance, cleaning, care, and limitations. Also **follow instructions** from the manufacturer and University regarding medical evaluations, fit testing, and shaving.

N-95 respirators only filter out particulate contaminants. They **do not protect** you from chemical vapors/gases, oxygen-deficient atmospheres, high risk exposures such as those created by aerosol-generating procedures (i.e. bronchoscopy, autopsy) or asbestos handling. Facial hair reduces the effectiveness of N-95 respiratory protection, but shaving is not required for voluntary use. If you have facial hair, you may wear a loose-fitting powered air-purifying respirator.



Voluntary Use

Although OSHA does not require fit testing or medical certification for voluntary use of an N-95 respirator, users must be provided and review Appendix D of the OSHA Respiratory Protection Standard (1910.134 App D). To access that information, visit the OSHA [website](#), or see page 2 of this handout. For questions related to your voluntary use of an N-95 respirator, please consult with your supervisor and/or EHS&RM.



Mandatory Information for Employees Using Respirators When Not Required Under the Standard

Appendix D to 29 CFR 1910.134

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. However, 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 employer provides respirators for your voluntary use, 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.

As a reminder, you should do the following:

1. **Read and heed** all instructions provided by the manufacturer on use, maintenance, cleaning and care, and warnings regarding the respirator's 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.

Thank you to the University of California Risk & Safety Group and the Safety Training Consortium for sharing this information.

For more information on respirator use at NMSU, see the [NMSU Respiratory Safety Program](#).