Voluntary use of filtering facepiece respirators (N95) for COVID-19

The employer must determine if respirators are necessary to protect the health of employees. If the employer determines employees do not need to wear respirators to protect their health and the employer does not require employees to use respirators, the use of filtering facepiece respirators (such as N95s) would be considered voluntary.

Assistance in making this determination can be found in the following publications:


Respiratory protection program for voluntary use of filtering facepiece respirators


If the employer determines the use of filtering facepiece respirators is voluntary, they must comply with 1910.134(c)(2)(i). The employer must determine the use of the respirators will not cause harm and provide employees with the information in Appendix D of the standard, *Information for employees using respirators when not required under standard.*

In determining if a respirator will not cause harm, the employer must decide if use of a filtering facepiece respirator could cause a greater hazard to the employee than not wearing one. For example, where an employee would be exposed to other hazards or conditions in the workplace (such as hazardous chemicals or heat) that may be exacerbated by the wearing of a respirator.

If voluntary use of respirators other than filtering facepiece respirators is allowed, the employer must implement a limited written program addressing medical determinations and cleaning, storage and maintenance, and provide Appendix D to their employees (see 1910.134(c)(2)(ii)).
Masks and respirators


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