
ADVISORY INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYEES WHO VOLUNTARILY USE N95 RESPIRATORS FOR COVID-19 PROTECTION

This information must be provided to Kansas State University (KSU) employees who voluntarily use N95 respirators in the workplace for COVID-19 protection where it is not required, regardless of whether or not the respirator was supplied by the University.

This information does *not* apply to respirator use that is required by regulations or for employees working in a medical/clinical setting. Anytime the employer requires the use of a respirator, additional requirements apply, such as medical clearance, training, and fit testing. Visit the KSU Environmental Health and Safety [Respiratory Protection Program](#)¹ website for additional information on respirator use.

Information and Mandatory Document

Voluntary use of N95 respirators for COVID-19 protection is allowed at KSU during the pandemic and does not require fit testing. The use of N95 respirators with an [exhalation valve](#)² is not allowed.

Please note that an unfitted or improperly worn N95 respirator may reduce its intended benefit. To ensure an adequate fit of an N95 watch this [video](#)³ from 3M or review this [factsheet](#)⁴ from NIOSH on how to put it on correctly and how to perform a user seal check.

Mandatory Document for Voluntary N95 Use

Voluntary N95 respirator use falls under OSHA's Respiratory Protection Standard (29 CFR 1910.134). This standard requires that employees be provided a copy of [Appendix D to Sec. 1910.134 \(Mandatory\) Information for Employees Using Respirators When Not Required Under the Standard](#)⁵ (see attached). For questions regarding the information provided, contact EHS at 785-532-5856.

Reusing N95 Respirator

The [CDC guidelines](#)⁶ say in general not to reuse an N95 more than five times. If the N95 is visibly stained, soiled, frayed, wet, or the straps are loose, toss it. This means the N95's integrity is considered to be compromised, even if it's only been used once or twice.

¹ Link for KSU Respiratory Protection Program: <https://www.k-state.edu/safety/occupational/respiratory-protection/>

² Link for types of respirators: <https://www.k-state.edu/safety/occupational/respiratory-protection/types/>

³ Link for 3M video: <https://youtu.be/2mnSy3hDHM4>

⁴ Link for NIOSH factsheet: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2010-133/pdfs/2010-133.pdf>

⁵ Link for Appendix D from OSHA Respiratory Protection Standard: <https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.134AppD>

⁶ Link to CDC guidelines for reusing N95: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/decontamination-reuse-respirators.html>



COVID-19 N95 Respirator Voluntary Use

Voluntary N95 respirator use falls under OSHA's Respiratory Protection Standard (29 CFR 1910.134). This standard requires that employees that voluntarily use N95 respirators be provided the following information.

Appendix D to Sec. 1910.134 (Mandatory) Information for Employees Using Respirators When Not Required Under the Standard

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.

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 respirators 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.

If you have any questions about this document, or the use of respirators please contact your supervisor or KSU EHS at 785-532-5856 or respirator@ksu.edu