

**Respiratory Protection Program**  
**Sherman Volunteer Fire Department EMS**  
Last reviewed 09/01/2015

**Program Administrator:**  
Sherman Ems Training Officer

# Respiratory Protection Program for (Agency Name)

## 1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this program is to ensure that all responders/employees of Sherman Fire Department (SVFD) are protected from exposure to influenza and airborne infectious diseases. This program applies to all responders/employees wearing N95 respirators. The term employee in this document refers to all individuals employed by this agency, whether compensated or not.

Engineering controls such as ventilation are the preferable first line of defense. However, engineering controls are not sufficient to prevent the spread of some infectious diseases. In these situations, respirators and other protective equipment must be used.

Some employees may wish to wear respirators during certain operations that do not require respiratory protection. If the use of respiratory protection in a specific case will not jeopardize the health or safety of the worker(s), SVFD will provide respirators for voluntary use. As outlined in the Scope and Application section of this program, voluntary respirator use is subject to certain requirements of this program.

## 2.0 SCOPE AND APPLICATION

This program applies to all employees who are required to wear respirators during normal work operations. All employees engaged in certain processes or tasks (as outlined in the table below) must be enrolled in the agency's respiratory protection program.

In addition, any employee who voluntarily wears a respirator when a respirator is not required is subject to the medical evaluation, cleaning, maintenance, and storage elements of this program, and must be provided with certain information specified in this section of the program.

Employees who voluntarily wear filtering facepieces (dust masks) are not subject to the medical evaluation, cleaning, storage, and maintenance provisions of this program.

The areas and tasks when N95 respirator use is appropriate are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1. Indications for N95 Respirator Use**

<b>Attending patients with:</b>
• <b>Influenza</b>
• <b>Acute respiratory illness symptomatic of influenza</b>
• <b>Tuberculosis</b>
• <b>Meningococcal meningitis</b>
• <b>Pertussis (whooping cough)</b>

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|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome)</b></li></ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Other airborne infectious disease</b></li></ul>        |

Employees participating in the respiratory protection program do so at no cost to them. The expense associated with training, medical evaluations and respiratory protection equipment will be borne by the agency.

### **3.0 RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **Program Administrator**

The Program Administrator is responsible for administering the respiratory protection program. Duties of the Program Administrator include:

- Identifying work areas, processes or tasks that require workers to wear respirators, and evaluating hazards.
- Selection of respiratory protection options.
- Monitoring respirator use to ensure that respirators are used in accordance with this program.
- Arranging for and/or conducting training.
- Ensuring proper storage and maintenance of respiratory protection equipment.
- Ensuring fit testing is done.
- Administering the medical surveillance program
- Keeping confidential all medical information they may witness.
- Maintaining records required by the program.
  1. Medical approval
  2. Training documentation
  3. Fit test approval
- Updating the respiratory protection program as needed

#### **Supervisors: (EMS Officers)**

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that the respiratory protection program is implemented in their particular areas. In addition to being knowledgeable about the program requirements for their own protection, supervisors must also ensure that the program is understood and followed by employees/volunteers under their supervision. Duties of the supervisor include:

- Ensuring that employees under their supervision (including new hires) have received appropriate training, fit testing, and annual medical evaluation.
- Ensuring the availability of appropriate respirators and accessories.
- Being aware of tasks requiring the use of respiratory protection.
- Enforcing the proper use of respiratory protection when necessary.
- Ensuring that respirators are properly cleaned, maintained, and stored according to the respiratory protection plan.

- Ensuring that respirators fit well and do not cause discomfort.
- Continually monitoring work areas and operations to identify respiratory hazards.
- Coordinating with the Program Administrator on how to address respiratory hazards or other concerns regarding the program.

### **Employees: (Volunteers)**

Employees have the responsibility to wear their respirator when and where required and in the manner in which they were trained. Employees must also:

- Care for and maintain their respirators as instructed, and store them in a clean sanitary location.
- Inform their supervisor if the respirator no longer fits well, and request a new one that fits properly.
- Inform their supervisor or the Program Administrator of any respiratory hazards that they feel are not adequately addressed in the workplace and of any other concerns that they have regarding the program.

## **4.0 PROGRAM ELEMENTS**

### **4.1 Selection Procedures:**

The Program Administrator will select respirators to be used, based on the hazards to which workers are exposed and in accordance with all OSHA standards. The Program Administrator will conduct a hazard evaluation for each operation, process, or work area where airborne contaminants may be present in routine operations or during an emergency.

Hazard Assessment: Employees/volunteers should wear N95 respirators when administering to individuals with confirmed, probable, or suspected influenza or other airborne infectious disease as outlined in Table 1.

#### *Updating the Hazard Assessment*

The Program Administrator must revise and update the hazard assessment as needed (e.g., any time work process changes may potentially affect exposure). If an employee feels that respiratory protection is needed during a particular activity, he/she should employ the appropriate respiratory protection and then contact his or her supervisor or the Program Administrator. The Program Administrator will evaluate the potential hazard, arranging for outside assistance as necessary. The Program Administrator will then communicate the results of that assessment back to the employees. If it is determined that respiratory protection is necessary, all other elements of this program will be in effect for those tasks and this program will be updated accordingly.

#### *NIOSH Certification*

All respirators must be certified by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and shall be used in accordance with the terms of that certification. Also, all filters,

cartridges, and canisters must be labeled with the appropriate NIOSH approval label. The label must not be removed or defaced while it is in use.

## Voluntary Respirator Use

**SVFD** will provide respirators at no charge to employees for voluntary use in circumstances when an employee wishes to increase the level of respiratory protection. The Program Administrator will provide all employees who voluntarily choose to wear a respirator with a copy of Appendix D of the standard. (Appendix D details the requirements for voluntary use of respirators by employees.)

## 4.2 Medical Evaluation

Employees who are either required to wear respirators, or who choose to wear a respirator voluntarily, must pass a medical exam before being permitted to wear a respirator on the job. Employees are not permitted to wear respirators until a physician or other licensed health care professional has determined that they are medically able to do so. Any employee refusing the medical evaluation will not be allowed to work in an area requiring respirator use. A licensed health care provider at **Dr. Barth, Dr. Allen or personal care physician** will provide the medical evaluations. Medical evaluation procedures are as follows:

- The medical evaluation will be conducted using the questions provided in Appendix C of OSHA's respiratory protection standard. The Program Administrator will provide a copy of this questionnaire to all employees requiring medical evaluations.
- To the extent feasible, the agency will assist employees who are unable to read the questionnaire (by providing help in reading the questionnaire). When this is not possible, the employee will be sent directly to the physician for medical evaluation.
- All affected employees will be given a copy of the medical questionnaire to fill out, along with a stamped and addressed envelope for mailing the questionnaire to the agency physician. Other methods of returning the questionnaires that would be acceptable must protect the privacy of the employee and prevent the employer from gaining access to the completed questionnaires. Employees will be permitted to fill out the questionnaire on company time.
- Follow-up medical exams will be granted to employees as required by the standard, and/or as deemed necessary by the agency's physician.
- All employees will be granted the opportunity to speak with the physician about their medical evaluation, if they so request.
- The Program Administrator has provided the agency's physician with a copy of this program, a copy of the respiratory protection standard and for each employee requiring evaluation:
  - his or her work area or job title,
  - proposed respirator type and weight,
  - length of time required to wear respirator,
  - expected physical work load (light, moderate, or heavy),
  - potential temperature and humidity extremes, and
  - any additional protective clothing required.

- Any employee required for medical reasons to wear a positive pressure air purifying respirator will be provided with a powered air purifying respirator.
- After an employee has received clearance and begun to wear his or her respirator, additional medical evaluations will be provided under the following circumstances:
  - Employee reports signs and/or symptoms related to the ability to use a respirator, such as shortness of breath, dizziness, chest pain, or wheezing.
  - The agency's physician or supervisor informs the Program Administrator that the employee needs to be reevaluated;
  - Information from this program, including observations made during fit testing and program evaluation, indicates a need for reevaluation;
  - three years or more have passed since the employee's last evaluation;
  - A change occurs in workplace conditions that may result in an increased physiological burden on the employee.

All examinations and questionnaires are to remain confidential between the employee and the physician.

### **4.3 Fit Testing**

Fit testing is required for employees required to use N95 respirators. Fit testing will not be done until employees receive medical clearance. Fit testing will be done by an individual trained in fit testing, the proper care and the storage of N95 respirators. Fit testing will be done:

- prior to being allowed to wear an N95 respirator;
- annually; and
- when there are changes in the employee's physical condition that could affect a successful fit, e.g., obvious change in body weight, facial scarring, etc.

Employees will be fit tested with the make, model, and size of respirator that they will actually wear. Employees will be provided with several models and sizes of respirators so that they may find an optimal fit.

Either the qualitative or quantitative fit test method is acceptable, and will be conducted based upon the OSHA approved protocol in Appendix A of the Respiratory Protection standard.

Fit test records will be maintained for one year or until the next fit test is administered.

### **4.4 Respirator Use**

*General Use Procedures:*

- Employees will use their respirators under conditions specified by this program, and in accordance with the training they receive on the use of each particular model. In addition, the respirator shall not be used in a manner for which it is not certified by NIOSH or by its manufacturer.

- All employees shall conduct user seal checks each time that they wear their respirator. Employees shall use either the positive or negative pressure check (depending on which test works best).
- Employees are not permitted to wear tight-fitting respirators if they have any condition, such as facial scars, facial hair, or missing dentures, that prevents them from achieving a good seal. Employees are not permitted to wear headphones, jewelry, or other articles that may interfere with the facepiece-to-face seal.

### *Respirator Malfunction*

For any malfunction of a respirator, such as breakthrough, facepiece leakage, or improperly working valve, the respirator wearer should inform his or her supervisor that the respirator no longer functions as intended, and, if possible, go to a safe area to maintain or replace the respirator. The supervisor must ensure that the employee receives the needed parts to repair the respirator, or is provided with a new respirator.

## **4.5 Cleaning, Maintenance, Change Schedules and Storage**

### *Cleaning*

Employees are not to clean disposable respirators. If a disposable respirator is soiled, saturated or causing significant resistance to inhalation, the employee should dispose of the respirator and obtain a new one.

### *Maintenance*

Respirators are to be properly maintained at all times in order to ensure that they function properly and adequately to protect the employee. Maintenance involves a thorough visual inspection for cleanliness and defects. Worn or deteriorated parts will be replaced prior to use. No components will be replaced or repairs made beyond those recommended by the manufacturer.

The following checklist will be used when inspecting respirators:

- Facepiece:
  - cracks, tears, or holes
  - facemask distortion
  - cracked or loose lenses/faceshield
- Headstraps:
  - breaks or tears

### *Change Schedules*

N95 respirators should be worn once and then thrown away unless the CDC says otherwise.

### *Storage*

Respirators must be stored in a clean, dry area, and in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. **SVFD** stores disposable N95 respirators in these locations:

- Ambulance Vehicle Cabinet
- EMS Supply Cabinet
- EMS 1<sup>st</sup> Responder Bag

The Program Administrator will store **SVFD's** supply of respirators and respirator components in their original manufacturer's packaging in the equipment storage room.

#### *Defective Respirators*

Respirators that are defective or have defective parts shall be taken out of service immediately.

If, during an inspection, an employee discovers a defect in a respirator, he/she is to bring the defect to the attention of his or her supervisor. Supervisors will give all defective respirators to the Program Administrator. The Program Administrator will decide whether to:

- Temporarily take the respirator out of service until it can be repaired.
- Perform a simple fix on the spot such as replacing a headstrap.
- Dispose of the respirator due to an irreparable problem or defect.

#### **4.6 Training**

The Program Administrator will provide training to respirator users and their supervisors on the contents of the **SVFD** Respiratory Protection Program and their responsibilities under it, and on the OSHA Respiratory Protection standard. Workers will be trained prior to using a respirator in the workplace. Supervisors will also be trained prior to using a respirator in the workplace or prior to supervising employees that must wear respirators.

The training course will cover the following topics:

- the **Sherman Volunteer Fire Department** Respiratory Protection Program
- the OSHA Respiratory Protection standard
- respiratory hazards encountered at **SVFD** and their health effects
- proper selection and use of respirators
- limitations of respirators
- respirator donning and user seal (fit) checks
- fit testing
- emergency use procedures
- maintenance and storage
- medical signs and symptoms limiting the effective use of respirators

Employees will be retrained at least annually or more often if needed (e.g., if they need to use a different respirator). Employees must demonstrate their understanding of the topics covered in the training through hands-on exercises and a written test. Respirator training will be documented by the Program Administrator and the documentation will include the type, model, and size of respirator for which each employee has been trained and fit tested.

## **5.0 PROGRAM EVALUATION**

The Program Administrator will conduct periodic evaluations of the workplace to ensure that the provisions of this program are being implemented. The evaluations will include regular consultations with employees who use respirators and their supervisors, site inspections and a review of records.

Problems identified will be noted in an inspection log and addressed by the Program Administrator. These findings will be reported to **SVFD** management, and the report will list plans to correct deficiencies in the respirator program and target dates for the implementation of those corrections.

## **6.0 DOCUMENTATION AND RECORDKEEPING**

A written copy of this program and the OSHA standard is kept in the Program Administrator's office and is available to all employees who wish to review it.

Also maintained in the Program Administrator's office are copies of training and fit test records. These records will be updated as new employees are trained, as existing employees receive refresher training, and as new fit tests are conducted.

The Program Administrator will also maintain copies of the medical records for all employees covered under the respirator program. The completed medical questionnaire and the physician's documented findings are confidential and will remain at **Dr. Barth, Dr. Allen or personal care physician of choice** will retain **only** the physician's written recommendation regarding each employee's ability to wear a respirator.

## **Appendix D to Sec. 1910.134 (Mandatory)**

**The employer must provide this document to any employee or volunteer who uses an employer-provided respirator voluntarily or provides his or her own respirator.**

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.