

H1N1 Virus Respiratory Protection Voluntary Use Requirements

General Requirements

OSHA has not established exposure limits for the H1N1 virus. An employee may voluntarily wear a NIOSH approved disposable particulate respirator¹ (examples include “N95”, “N100”, “P100”, etc.) for protection against the H1N1 virus during their work activities provided that:

- The employee must be able to remove the NIOSH approved disposable particulate respirator at any time if he/she feels the effects of constricted breathing. Including, but not limited to, shortness of breath, dizziness, feeling of faintness, etc. or any other adverse effects expressed by the employee;
- The supervisor determines that such respirator use will not in itself create a hazard;
- The NIOSH approved disposable particulate respirator will NOT be used for protection against exposure above established OSHA permissible exposure limits or high risk exposure situations; and,
- The employee must be able to remove the NIOSH approved disposable particulate respirator at any time during work.

Employees who have a history of heart or respiratory problems, or feel they may have such problems shall not use any respirator, including NIOSH approved disposable particulate respirators, without a physician’s approval.

¹An N95 respirator is one of nine types of disposable particulate respirators. Particulate respirators are also known as “air-purifying respirators” because they protect by filtering particles out of the air you breathe. Workers can wear any one of the particulate respirators for protection against diseases spread through the air. NIOSH-approved disposable respirators are marked with the manufacturer’s name, the part number (P/N), the protection provided by the filter (e.g. N95), and “NIOSH.”
—National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

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

Appendix D to OSHA 1910.134 (Mandatory)

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.

Employee’s Name	Employee’s Signature	Date
Supervisor’s Name	Supervisor’s Signature	Date
Department	Contact Number	