



03/18/20

## **Strategies for Respirator Use and Fit Testing During Periods of Supply Difficulty**

UW-Madison Environmental and Occupational Health, in consultation with University Health Services and campus administration, have reviewed the current scope of respirator use on campus. Based on this review, we recommended the following strategies to protect the UW-Madison community and to prioritize limited respiratory protection supplies:

### **Priority areas for assuring respiratory protection:**

- Patient Care and Direct Work with COVID-19 Agent:
  - UW-Madison staff providing direct care to patients suspected or confirmed with COVID-19 infection (e.g. University Health Services, UW Health)
  - UW-Madison researchers performing research tasks on protocols related to COVID-19
- UW-Madison staff presently enrolled in the campus respirator program. Examples include:
  - Animal care technicians currently required to wear PPE for to provide daily care of animals
  - Researchers and service using N95 masks to protect against biological and particulate hazards
- New Respirator Uses
  - New respirator uses will be evaluated and prioritized on a case by case basis considering the scale of hazard and the urgency of work.

### **Strategies for Extending the Use and Availability of PPE**

What EOH will do:

- Fit tests will only be performed for high-priority uses and approved new respirator users, temporarily suspending annual fit tests of existing users. New users will need to have supplies on hand both for use as well as fit testing.
- Work with the EOC to allocate respirators based on the highest priorities.
- Work with campus planning officials on the procurement of additional supplies.
- Consult with individual units on the potential for extending the use of filtering face-piece respirators beyond single day use.

What you can do:

Based on review of your current written respirator program:

- Determine whether tasks can be delayed until supply chain improves.
- Use a powered air purifying respirator instead if you have one, including decontamination and re-use of PAPR hood.

- If you have approval for a half mask cartridge, use this instead. Be sure to decontaminate the face piece before re-use.
- Reduce the number of staff or activities that use respirators.
- Immediately discontinue voluntary use of disposable respirators.
- Work with EOH or the Office of Biological Safety to determine the feasibility of extending available respirator use.
  - Generally, N95 respirators used for particulate protection such as with lab animal allergens can be used for up to a week.
  - Extended use of N95 respirators may be possible with some microbial exposures. However, please check with the Office of Biosafety to confirm that this is acceptable before doing so.
- If you must use N95s, evaluate current stock and determine how long you can continue to function with this stock.
- In the event that fit testing is needed for additional staff, ensure that you have adequate supply to provide respirators for each staff member to be fit tested, in addition to ongoing supply on hand.
- Review and prepare to implement your unit's Continuity of Operations Plans in the event that supplies of needed equipment are no longer available.

See also:

Checklist for Healthcare Facilities — Strategies for Optimizing the Supply of N95 Respirators during the COVID-19 Response, accessed at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/checklist-n95-strategy-h.pdf>

Thank you for your support during this challenging time.

Regards,

*Christopher Strang*

Christopher Strang  
Assistant Vice Chancellor, Environment, Health & Safety

**Department of Environment, Health & Safety**

University of Wisconsin-Madison 30 East Campus Mall Madison, Wisconsin 53715-1227  
608/265-5000 Fax: 608/262-6767 E-mail: [ehsit@fpm.wisc.edu](mailto:ehsit@fpm.wisc.edu) [www.ehs.wisc.edu](http://www.ehs.wisc.edu)