

Information for Employees Using Filtering Facepiece Respirators (more commonly known as “disposable dust masks”)

Prepared by the SI Office of Safety, Health and Environmental Management (OSHEM)

Respirators are an effective method of protection against specific hazards when properly chosen and worn. Even when your exposures are well below the maximum allowable health limits established by SI policy, the use of respirators may offer you an added level of comfort and protection. Most departments purchase “dust masks” without realizing that these simple devices are still part of the SI Respirator Program. Their use needs to be reviewed by your supervisor, safety manager and SI OSHEM to be sure that they are appropriate for the hazard. “Dust masks” that are purchased for a comfort reason, and not tracked by your safety manager or left in storage on a common shelf, are often mistakenly worn in a different, more hazardous operation, possibly resulting in injury or illness. Your supervisor is still responsible for the proper selection and use of any type of personal protective equipment.....even “disposables”.

If your supervisor, Safety Coordinator, and OSHEM have approved the use of filtering facepiece respirators (FFP) or “dust masks” for your use in your job, you should know the following:

- ✓ If the FFP/dust mask is worn voluntarily, and not because there is an overexposure risk, your supervisor needs to identify the users to OSHEM. And, you need to wear it safely and keep it clean. Dispose of respirator after use, when soiled or at the end of the work shift.
- ✓ If the FFP/dust mask is required based on facility and OSHEM evaluation, you need to be medically evaluated and properly fitted for even the disposable respirator type. Your supervisor can arrange this through OSHEM.
- ✓ The FFP/dust mask is designed to filter exactly that: Dust and particulates. It will **NOT** protect you against gases or chemical vapors or odors such as from ammonia, chlorine, cleaning sprays or polishes. If those chemicals bother you during work, check with your supervisor so that better ventilation, different work methods, or a different respirator can be provided.
- ✓ Filters are rated for how well they holdup in oil-mist atmospheres and how well they capture particles. The most commonly used types are either a “N95” (95% efficiency) or “P100” (almost 100% particle capture). N95 might be appropriate for common cleaning tasks. P100 might be worn for protection against allergens or heavy dusting. **NOTE: no filter will protect you if it doesn’t provide a tight faceseal or is worn over a beard.**
- ✓ Read all instructions provided by the manufacturer on use, maintenance, and warnings as to the FFP/dust mask’s limitations. The packaging for the FFP/dust mask will tell you what the respirator is to be used for, and **must state** that the FFP is certified by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

I have read and understand this information on: _____ (date)

Employee’s Name & Signature: _____