

Guidance for Respirator Use for COVID-19

Should you wear a facemask or do you need to wear a respirator?

- If you perform work where you cannot maintain recommended social distances of six (6) feet or more (for example, health care workers), or if you are involved in any decontamination work for COVID-19, you should wear either an N95 or other type of respiratory protection described below.
- It is *recommended* that all persons on campus wear a facemask when around other people if they are not using a respirator.

The following devices are *not* respirators but may provide some protection against COVID-19 exposure, especially if you maintain social distances of six (6) feet or more:

			
Dust mask – Typically has only one strap but may have two.	Surgical mask – Typically has two straps that either go around your ears or may go behind your head	Surgical mask	A hand-made facemask

For purchased facemasks, review the manufacturer’s instructions. Wash your hands for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer before putting-on or taking-off a facemask. They can be reused but should be discarded if they become soiled, damaged, or if you are exposed to potentially infectious material from another person (e.g. by cough or sneeze). There are no fit testing, training or medical clearance requirements when using facemasks. Guidance on how to sterilize *hand-made* face masks can be found in Appendix A.

The most commonly used types of *respirators* found on campus are shown below

			
Filtering Facepiece (N95, N100) It may be labeled with an “R” or “P” instead of “N”, but provides the same protection	Elastomeric half-mask respirator shown with a high efficiency particulate filter	A full-face elastomeric respirator	A powered air-purifying respirator (PAPR)

If you are provided a *respirator* for use at work, there are two categories of user:

Voluntary Users: People who are provided a filtering facepiece respirator to wear but where you can maintain social distances, and are not involved in any decontamination work for COVID-19. People in this



category are called 'voluntary users'. If the only respirator you use as a voluntary user is a filtering facepiece, you need to review Appendix B at the end of this document. There are no medical clearance or fit testing requirements for voluntary users of filtering facepiece respirators. If you wear any other type of respiratory protection, even if you bring it from home, you must review Appendix B and must be medically cleared as outlined for 'respirator users', but you do not need to be fit tested.

Respirator Users: If you are assigned any type of respirator to wear and where you cannot maintain social distances (for example, health care workers), or if you are involved in any decontamination work for COVID-19, you are a 'respirator user'. Respirator users must be medically cleared by EHS, fit tested to their respirator, and must be trained. You can arrange these services by writing to ehsmedserv@vt.edu or by calling 1-3998.

- ⇒ If you were fitted and medically cleared within the past year for the specific brand and model of respirator you have been assigned, no action is required before you begin using the respirator.
- ⇒ If you are provided a different model of N95 or a different type of respirator, you must contact EHS to be fit tested to your new respirator.

Appendix A: How to Wear a Cloth Face Covering



Cloth face coverings should—

- fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
- be secured with ties or ear loops
- include multiple layers of fabric
- allow for breathing without restriction
- be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape

Homemade Cloth Face Coverings

It is recommended you wear cloth face coverings at work and in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies.)

The use of simple cloth face coverings slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others. Cloth face coverings fashioned from household items or made at home from common materials at low cost can be used as an additional, voluntary public health measure.

Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.

The cloth face coverings recommended are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators. Those are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders, as recommended by current CDC guidance.



Should cloth face coverings be washed or otherwise cleaned regularly? How regularly?

Yes. They should be routinely washed depending on the frequency of use.

How does one safely sterilize/clean a cloth face covering?

A washing machine should suffice in properly washing a face covering.

How does one safely remove a used cloth face covering?

Individuals should be careful not to touch their eyes, nose, and mouth when removing their face covering and wash hands immediately after removing.

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>



Appendix B: Information for Employees Using Respirators When Not Required Under the Standard

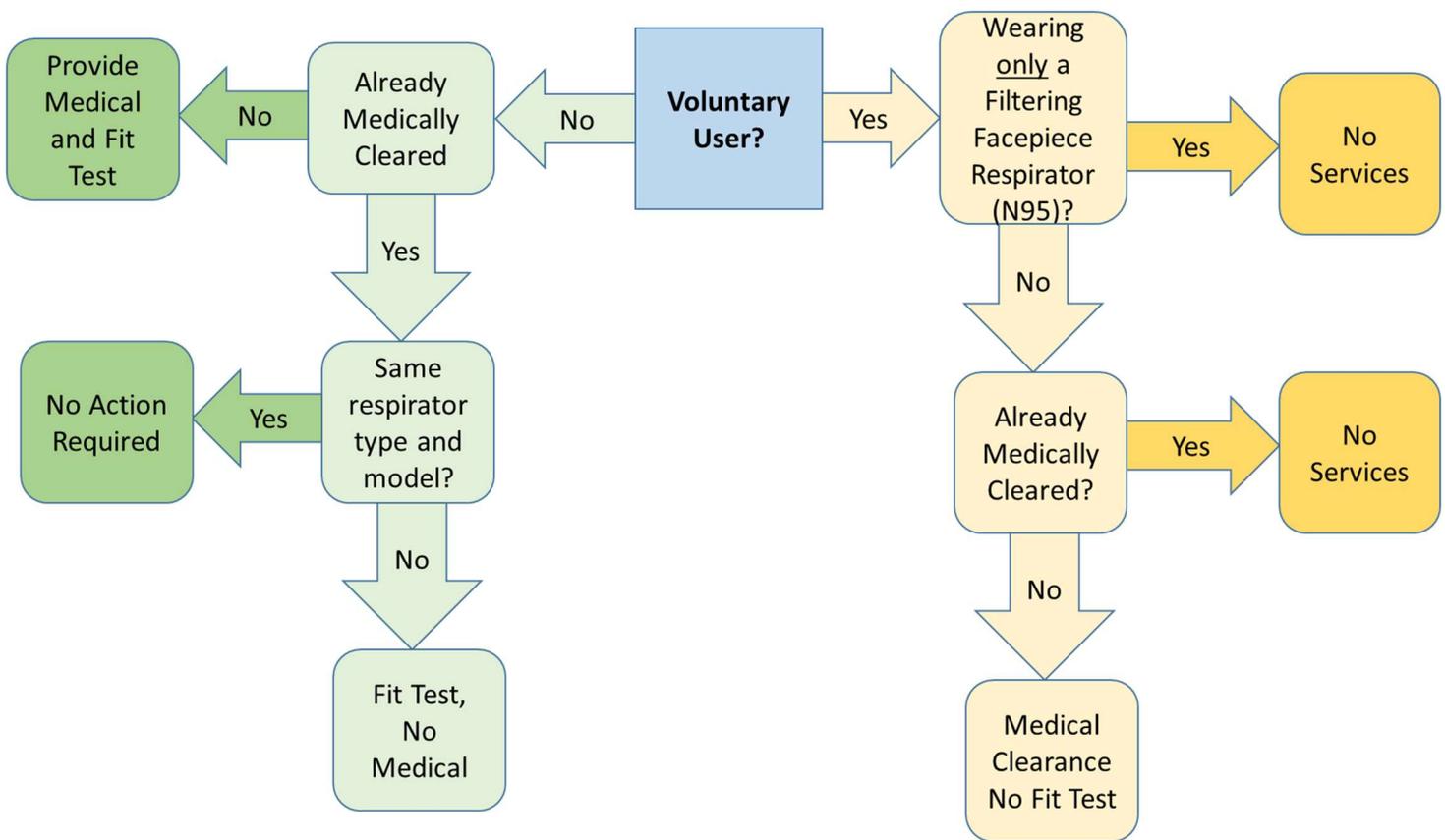
Respirators are an effective method of protection against designated hazards when properly selected and worn. Respirator use is encouraged, even when exposures are below the exposure limit, to provide an additional level of comfort and protection for workers. However, if a respirator is used improperly 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, please contact Environmental Health and Safety at 540-231-3600.

Appendix C: Guidance on When Medical Services are Needed When Using Respiratory Protection for COVID-19

Voluntary Users are those persons who are provided a respirator (of any type) to wear but where they can maintain social distances and are not involved in any decontamination work for COVID-19.



All medical services, including respirator fit testing, are provided through the EHS Occupational Health Clinic, which is located at 2020 Kraft Dr in Suite 2100. From campus, heading south on Southgate Drive, turn onto Research Center Drive and then right onto Kraft Drive. To schedule an appointment, send an email to ehsmedserv@vt.edu or call 1-3998.