

OSHA RESPIRATOR GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19

Notice from UOSH Division Director Cameron Ruppe:

UOSH is not enforcing any new rules when it comes to COVID-19. Many of the guidance documents from the CDC and others contain recommendations, but none of those recommendations are enforceable by UOSH.

The companies/sites that require all employees to wear respirators for the sole purpose of protecting against COVID-19 are, in my view, attempting to adhere to recommendations outside of UOSH jurisdiction. Therefore, UOSH will not be pursuing citations in those situations. However, when employees are wearing respirators for recognized hazards such as silica, respirators should be used only when they have followed the proper procedures of fit-testing, medical evaluations, etc.

- UOSH is not requiring that employers have their employees wear cloth masks and is not requiring the use of N95 respirators or other respirators as PPE to protect against COVID-19.
- CSHOs will not address the voluntary use of cloth masks, which are not respirators, in the workplace unless employees are wearing such masks when they should be using a respirator to protect from inhalation of substances (for example, silica) in the workplace.
- UOSH will address respirator use/non-use, fit tests, and medical evaluations on a case-by-case basis; note that medical questionnaires for medical evaluations can be submitted to a physician or other licensed health care professional in accordance with 29 CFR 1910.134(e)(2).
- The requirement to use respirators must be based on the nature of the work or task performed. Employers must do what they can to ensure workers are protected from inhalation hazards. This can be done through implementation of engineering controls (e.g., local exhaust, wet methods, etc.) and/or work practice/administrative controls, and, if not feasible, by providing appropriate respiratory protection and ensuring employees inspect, clean/disinfect, maintain and store their respirators in accordance with 29 CFR 1910.134(h).

Additional - Enforcement guidance from OSHA received last week:

<https://www.osha.gov/memos/2020-04-03/enforcement-guidance-respiratory-protection-and-n95-shortage-due-coronavirus>