

# Environmental Health and Safety

Consulting Training Service



on the use of a respirator. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), hand washing is the most important means of preventing the spread of disease.

- Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently, especially after using the rest room and before eating or touching your face.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Surfaces commonly contacted by hands should also be disinfected periodically. These include, but are not limited to: telephones, computer keyboards and mice, table and desk tops, door knobs, drinking fountains, sink faucet handles, and paper towel dispensers.
- For more information, refer to fact sheet "Hand Washing and Disinfection: Reducing the Spread of Infection".



## Getting Assistance

Contact EH&S regarding questions about the voluntary use of N95 respirators. Additional information about pandemic influenza can be found on the CDC ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)) and OSHA ([www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)) websites.



## Environmental Health & Safety

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## Respirators During Influenza Pandemics

### A Guide for Use



*World Class. Face to Face.*

*Think Safety. Act Safely!*

### **What is an Influenza Pandemic?**

Pandemic influenza refers to a worldwide outbreak of influenza among people when a new strain of the virus emerges that has the ability to infect humans and to spread from person to person.

### **How Influenza Spreads Between People**

Influenza is thought to be primarily spread through large droplets that directly contact the nose, mouth or eyes. These droplets are produced when infected people cough, sneeze or talk, sending the large droplets and very small sprays into the nearby air and into contact with other people.



### **Respirator Use**

Employees with jobs requiring frequent close contact (within 6 feet) with co-workers and the general population (schools, high volume retail), are considered by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to have a medium risk of exposure.

Where contact with people with known flu-like symptoms is not expected, employees with a medium risk of exposure can use barriers to prevent sprays of potentially infected liquid droplets (from talking, coughing, or sneezing) from contacting their nose or mouth. A surgical mask or the voluntary use of an N95 respirator will provide such barrier protection. Use of an N95 respira-



tor should be considered if there is an expectation of close contact with persons showing flu like symptoms during an influenza pandemic. If a supervisor thinks a respirator might be necessary, the supervisor contacts EH&S to determine if the employee is required to be in WSU's respiratory protection program. Please refer to the Respiratory Protection factsheet "Respiratory Protection, Breathe Easy" or Safety Policy and Procedure Manual section S80.80, or contact your EH&S office.



### **Voluntary Use of Respirators**

WSU employees and students wanting to voluntarily wear an N95 respirator as a precaution should be aware of the proper use and limitations of respirators. Before wearing an N95 respirator consider the following:

- Use only a National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) approved respirator; a NIOSH approval label will appear on or in the respirator packaging.
- Read and follow all instructions provided by the manufacturer about the use, maintenance, and warnings regarding the respirator's limitations.
- Do not use an N95 for other tasks unless the task has been evaluated by a safety and health professional.
- Only one person should use a single N95 respirator; do not share respirators.
- Respirators should be dis-



posed of after each use.

### **Medical Evaluation**

Although a medical evaluation is not required to voluntarily wear an N95 respirator, the respirator might increase demands on the respiratory and circulatory systems. Individuals with respiratory or circulatory limitations should consult their physicians before wearing an N95 respirator.

### **Respirator Fit Testing**

Respirator fit-testing is not required for voluntary respiratory use, but is recommended. WSU employees and students voluntarily using N95s who are interested in fit-testing can contact respirator suppliers for information. N95 respirators and fit-test kits can be purchased from the following companies:

- Lab Safety Supply ([www.LSS.com](http://www.LSS.com); 800-356-0783)
- Safety and Supply Co (509-534-0661)
- Norco, Inc. (509-535-9808)
- Grainger ([www.grainger.com](http://www.grainger.com); 509-535-9882)

Employees and students are responsible for all costs associated with voluntary use of N95 respirators, including the purchase of their respirators.

### **Flu Prevention**

Flu prevention should not be based solely

