



Coronavirus Update

N95 Respirator Shortage due to COVID—19 Pandemic

The U.S. Department of Labor has issued some new guidance measures to help fight supply shortages of disposable N95 respirators. The guidelines indicate that employers should reassess their operations and examine whether it is possible to reduce the use of N95 respirators in any way. Three keys measures to assess concerning mask usage would be;

1. Engineering controls
2. Administrative controls
3. Work practices

Companies can consider moving work outdoors for better ventilation or the possible use of wet methods to reduce airborne dust exposure. The use of local exhaust systems or the suspension of non-essential scopes of work are other options to reduce the use of N95 respirators. Also, there are other filtering facepiece respirators that can be used instead of the N95 respirators. These would include; N99, N100, R95, R99, R100, P95, P99, and P100, type respirators.

In good faith, when no alternatives are available or those that are could create more significant risks, consideration can be given to extending the use of N95 respirators beyond what would be considered normal use. Also, N95 respirators that are past the current shelf life may be utilized during the current situation. These interim guidelines are effective immediately and will be in place until further notice.

For more information regarding the USDOL/OSHA and CDC guidelines please access the following links:

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDOL/bulletins/284c608>

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

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

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