

## **POLICY HS 13.7 – Respirator Program**

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**Policy Type: Health and Safety**

**Subsection: Thirteen, Personal Protective Equipment**

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**Policy Title: Respirator Program**

**Policy Number: HS 13.7**

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**Policy Approved By: Northumberland County Council Resolution #**

**Effective Date:**

**Revised:**

**Applicable To: All County Workers**

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### **POLICY STATEMENT**

The County of Northumberland (the County) is committed to providing a healthy and safe work environment. The County believes that all services provided are of extreme importance, however, no job is so urgent that time and care cannot be taken to conduct work safely. People are identified as the County's most valuable resource, and the purpose of this policy is to provide safe procedures for the use of respirators to protect workers from exposure to airborne contaminants including infectious diseases such as viruses. The Management Operations Committee Team and Council will allocate appropriate resources to support workers in managing the health and safety program initiatives and innovative safe work practice.

### **SCOPE**

This Policy applies in any worker and location in which County workers are engaged in work-related activities where respiratory protection may be required.

### **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this policy are to educate and protect all County workers, to increase awareness about the hazards of working around airborne contaminants, to provide protective measures to help protect all County workers from potential adverse health effects.

The County wants to protect workers from inhaling hazardous airborne contaminants when:

- a) airborne contaminants jeopardize infection control.
- b) engineering or administrative control measures are not adequate.
- c) controls are being instituted.

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### **AUTHORITY**

Implementation and authority of this Policy shall follow the Internal Responsibility System within the County whereby all workers, supervisors, managers, directors, and County Council have a responsibility for a safe work environment complying with the following:

- Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and Regulations 490/09 and 833
- Ontario Regulation 67/93 Health Care
- Canadian Standard CSA Z94.4-18
- Golden Plough Infection Control Manual
- HS 1.2 Northumberland County Corporate Health and Safety Policy
- HS 20.1 WHMIS 2015 Policy
- Workplace Safety and Insurance Act (WSIA)

### **DEFINITIONS**

**Inhalation or breathing in** means the drawing of air or other substances (fumes, mists, vapor, dust, etc.) into the lungs (the respiratory system).

**Inhalation hazards** means any hazardous substances that are taken into the body by breathing it in.

### **PROCEDURES**

A worker may be required to handle hazardous materials as part of the duties of their position. During a widespread viral outbreak resulting in a pandemic, workers may not always be able to adhere to physical distancing requirements to reduce risk of disease spread. In cases where physical distancing is not possible, a worker will follow the County's policy outlining appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Each department shall follow this Respirator Policy, the Communicable Disease Infection Control Policy (HS 12.1), as well as develop their own specific procedures relevant to the specific hazards that the workers are exposed or likely to be exposed to, that provide a greater level of safety.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

The County shall:

- a) comply with Legislative and Regulatory requirements
- b) prepare and implement a written respirator protection program and policy.
- c) ensure all departments abide by this program.
- d) supply and issue appropriate respirators based on evaluations by Management.

Supervisors shall:

- a) determine which positions in the department are exposed or could potentially be exposed to respiratory hazards and evaluate the potential requirement of controlling the hazards.

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- b) enforce safe work procedures and proper use of personal protective equipment.
- c) maintain a list of acceptable respirators for each hazard.
- d) ensure respirators are clean, sanitized, inspected, and stored in accordance with manufacture instructions.
- e) communicate hazards to workers.
- f) ensure that workers who require use of respirators receive written instructions and training prior to initial use of a respirator, and refresher training every two (2) years or as needed.
- g) provide and document department specific training, specific to airborne contaminants that County workers could potentially be exposed to (both initial training for new workers and regular reviews for existing workers).
- h) ensure that health screening, fit testing, and training are completed prior to assigning a worker any task that requires the use of a respirator.
- i) educate workers on the reporting procedure of hazards and injuries.
- j) deal with any non-compliance.
- k) investigate and document any injuries and near misses.
- l) in the event of a worker injury, comply with policy HS 5.3 and complete HS 5.5 Injury Property Damage Investigation report, as well as any required WSIB paperwork.

Workers must:

- a) participate in training and education.
- b) follow instructions for the use and care of respirators identified by the County and the manufacturer.
- c) maintain a clean-shaven facial condition in accordance with CSA Z94.4-18 Annex P examples of acceptable facial hair and refrain from having any object or material that will interfere with the seal or operation of the required respirator.
- d) inspect a respirator prior to each use and if dirty or in poor operating condition, follow department procedures for removing from service and reporting.
- e) report any violation of safe work procedures, changes in process, equipment, or operating procedure that may impact respiratory protection requirements to their immediate supervisor, manager, or Joint Health and Safety Representative (JHSR).
- f) inform their immediate supervisor, manager, or JHSR if they do not have the proper information or training.
- g) inform their immediate supervisor, manager, or the HSEP department if they have a medical condition that could impede their use of a respirator or participate in fit testing.

Visitors to a County worksite who enter an area where the use of respirator protection is required shall:

- a) abide by written instructions and training for the use and care of acceptable respirators as identified by the County.
- b) perform a negative/positive pressure seal check after donning a tight fitting respirator.

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- c) maintain a clean-shaven facial condition in accordance with CSA Z94.4-18 Annex P examples of acceptable facial hair and refrain from having any object or material that will interfere with the seal or operation of the required respirator check that their respirator is clean and in good operating condition prior to each use.
- d) remove a respirator from service that is defective or unclean.
- e) ensure that disposable (single use) respirators shall not be used more than once.

**Note:** For certain work sites (Golden Plough Lodge, Paramedic areas) identified as having airborne biological hazards, visitors will be restricted entry. During a pandemic outbreak, the County may potentially restrict access to any County worksite as deemed appropriate and necessary for safety.

All County Joint Health and Safety Committees (JHSC) and JHSRs shall:

- a) assist in identifying, reporting, and investigating reports of hazards and unsafe working conditions, as well as participate in resolving the concern.
- b) assist in revising/updating this policy, along with management, to ensure the effectiveness.
- c) participate, contribute, and enforce this policy to workers and demonstrate leadership.
- d) assist a worker in the event of a violation or request for information.
- e) assist in reviewing respirator training and education program.
- f) when necessary, make recommendations in writing to management.

The Health Safety Emergency Planning (HSEP) department shall:

- a) be responsible for the administration, approval, and maintenance of this policy and program, along with management.
- b) along with department management, complete a hazard assessment in each work area to determine the respiratory hazard present (if any) and to assist in the selection of appropriate respirators.
- c) ensure that assessments for respiratory hazards are conducted.
- d) provide necessary guidance to managers, supervisors, and workers in relation to this policy.
- e) assist in worker education and training.
- f) investigate any reports of unsafe working conditions and assist in resolving the concern.
- g) monitor the program and use of respirators on a regular basis.
- h) investigate any reports of unsafe working conditions and assist in resolving the concern.
- i) document injuries and exposures in compliance with policy HS 5.3 Injury Illness Incident Property Damage Investigation.
- j) Inform the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) and the local health unit of any workers who have been exposed to a hazardous substance and required medical attention.

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### **Exposure Hazards and Injury Process**

A hazard assessment of the work area shall be performed to determine a respiratory hazard is present and to assist in the selection of appropriate respirators.

Inhalation of hazardous materials, biological particles, vapors, gases, mist, dust, fumes, smoke, etc. can affect the body in multiple ways. This includes respiratory illness, irritation, allergic reaction, or other damage to the lungs, respiratory tract, and/or mucous membranes.

A foreign substance may be absorbed into the bloodstream in the lungs and then distributed through the body. Even if a substance is not listed as hazardous, inhaling dusts, etc. can irritate the lungs.

Chronic (long-term) inhalation of such substances can lead to permanent damage including bronchitis, emphysema or pneumoconiosis.

In the event of an exposure or injury, the worker shall:

- a) seek immediate first aid;
- b) notify their Supervisor of exposure or injury;
- c) seek medical attention if required;
- d) follow the proper reporting procedures and completion of proper documentation (HS 5.5 Injury Property Damage Investigation Report and WSIB Form 6 if applicable); and
- e) follow self-monitoring procedures as per direction of the County and Public Health Unit if the exposure was to a designated virus during a pandemic.

In the event of an exposure or injury, the supervisor shall:

- a) ensure the worker is transported to seek medical attention if required;
- b) follow the proper reporting procedures and completion of proper documentation (HS 5.5 Injury Property Damage Investigation Report and WSIB Form 7 if applicable);
- c) report viral exposures to the HSEP department during a declared pandemic; and
- d) investigate root cause and determine corrective actions to minimize the chances of a similar injury or exposure.

### **Respirator Selection**

1. For those workers exposed or potentially exposed to airborne contaminants and where engineering controls are not possible or sufficient, appropriate PPE such as an appropriately-selected respirator may be required.
2. All respirators will be selected in consultation with respirator suppliers, CSA Z94.4-18, Health Canada, Centre for Disease Control, the MLITSD, and the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care.
3. Selection choice shall be based on identified hazards in the department and select those accepted as being suitable for the protection against those hazards. Selection shall consider both emergency and non-emergency use. Consideration should be

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given for extraordinary circumstances in operation such as extreme temperature or limited working space.

4. Notification will be given to the JHSC and HSEP department when changes to regulatory criteria, consensus standards and technological developments that may impact on the selection of respirators.
5. Respirators and other face coverings may be selected during a pandemic as directed by the Public Health authorities and as appropriate to the type of work being conducted.

### **Health Assessment**

1. Fit testing should not be conducted until the person being tested has completed a health assessment to determine if the individual is eligible to wear the respirator. The health assessment is intended to identify medical conditions which may place workers who use the respirator at risk.
2. If a preliminary health assessment questionnaire identifies items of concern, a more detailed assessment should be carried out by a health professional.

### **Respirator Fit Testing**

1. Fit testing of tight-fitting respirators is required to determine which brand, model and size of respirator fits the user and provides adequate protection. The results of a qualitative or quantitative fit test shall be used to determine the effectiveness for the person and identified respirator.
2. No person shall use a respirator until a satisfactory qualitative or quantitative fit test has been achieved between the person and the respirator.
3. No person shall work in an area where respiratory equipment is required until a satisfactory result is achieved between a person and required respirator.
4. Respirator fit testing and user seal checks shall be conducted in accordance with standard CSA Z94.4-18.

### **Training**

Workers who are exposed or are likely to be exposed to airborne contaminants shall be provided with appropriate information, instruction, and supervision to protect their health and safety. All workers are encouraged to provide continuous feedback on the policy to their supervisor and JHSR. Communication will be through the following methods:

- Corporate Health and Safety Policy Manual
- Worker training sessions/safety talks
- Health and Safety meetings/minutes

The County shall provide appropriate respirator training and education for all workers and managers who are required to wear respirators. Training will occur at minimum every two (2) years on the proper use and care of the respiratory equipment assigned. Refresher training will be provided as required. Training shall include the following:

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- reasons for respirator use.
- how improper fit, usage, or maintenance can compromise the protective effect.
- limitations and capabilities of the respirator.
- proper use of the respirator in routine and emergency situations.
- corrective measures for respirator malfunction.
- inspection of respirator and proper seals.
- how to put on and take off the respirator.
- respirator maintenance and storage.
- how to recognize medical signs and symptoms that may limit or prevent the effective use of respirators.

Any department that uses respirators for protection against infectious diseases may have additional training, including the following:

- infection control.
- other required PPE.
- order of putting on and removing all required PPE.
- procedures for removing PPE so as to not cross contaminate.
- procedures for hand disinfection.

It is the responsibility of management of these departments to provide and document new and returning workers with department specific respirator training (for initial, refresher, and reviews).

### **Non-Compliance**

1. Workers who fail to comply with the health and safety requirements or those who consistently demonstrate poor safety performance shall be subject to disciplinary measures.
2. Sufficient training, explanation, and assistance shall be given to all workers to ensure that they fully comprehend what is required of them. However, neither management nor workers will tolerate unsafe behaviour or non-compliance with the safety policies and procedures.
3. The disciplinary procedure for health and safety issues shall follow the progressive disciplinary steps as outlined in Human Resource Policy 4.4.1 Discipline.
4. Contractors and their employees shall be subjected to the same disciplinary and warning system as County workers. Copies of such actions shall be forwarded to the contractor's management for their records. Under certain circumstances, a contractor may be refused the right of entry to the premises due to non-compliance with its health and safety policies and procedures.

### **REVIEW**

The County will review this policy as needed (if required by a change in working conditions or legislation) and as inclusion in the Corporate Health and Safety Policy Manual. The review will be completed by the Joint Health and Safety Committees and the management team and may include feedback from all workers.