

Controlling Hazardous Air Contaminants and Respiratory Protection

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Status Final

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Policy Type [University](#)

Contact Office [Environmental Health and Safety](#)

Oversight Executive

Vice President for Research

Applies To Academic Division, the Medical Center, and the College at Wise.

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Reason for Policy

To protect faculty, staff, and students from harmful air contaminants and other factors which may lead to illnesses or disabilities.

Definition of Terms

Control

The application of procedures which isolate, substitute materials and processes or remove contaminants so that workers or the public are protected.

Engineering Controls

Processes that may include either (1) enclosure or confinement of a work process generating harmful air contaminants; (2) general dilution ventilation or local exhaust ventilation at the point of generation.

Evaluation

Measuring and inspecting the workplace environment to describe potential exposures and make decisions regarding their seriousness.

Harmful Air Contaminants

Includes, but is not limited to, dusts, fibers, smoke, sprays, aerosols (including biologically-derived), gases, fumes and vapors.

Industrial Hygiene

The science and the art of recognizing, evaluating, and controlling environmental factors or stresses at the workplace which may cause illness or disabilities among the workforce or community as a whole.

Recognition

Requires extensive knowledge of potential workplace exposures to hazardous materials, chemicals, or agents.

Policy Statement

Departments will consult first with the EHS Industrial Hygienist or Respiratory Program Administrator before allowing an employee or student to use a respirator. EHS will evaluate the work environment or process that may be generating harmful air contaminants and advise on appropriate controls to eliminate or mitigate exposures. Controls to include but are not limited to engineering, administrative or process controls. When effective controls are not feasible, or while they are being instituted, respiratory protection may be required as determined by the EHS evaluation.

1. Departmental Responsibility:

Consultation with EHS is required if a department/laboratory has a work environment or performs work processes that can generate harmful air contaminants or could result in releases of contaminants to the atmosphere. Departments may not utilize respiratory protection for affected individuals prior to consultation.

EHS will provide consultative services at no charge to the department/laboratory. There may, however, be charges applied to the requesting department/laboratory if environmental samples are collected and subsequently analyzed by a certified commercial laboratory. The fees will not exceed those charged by the commercial laboratory.

EHS administers the University's [Respiratory Protection Program](#) (RPP). The RPP includes all University faculty, staff and students who must wear respirators as determined by EHS due to the infeasibility of successful controls or containment. The RPP also includes individuals who choose to wear respirators for additional comfort and/or protection in the performance of their job duties. Departments shall provide respirators for the faculty, staff or student member when such equipment is necessary as determined by EHS and coordinate initial medical clearance and annual medical evaluations for respirator users with UVa WorkMed. EHS in consultation with the department will determine:

- The need or prudence of respiratory protection.
- The proper respirator selection.
- How to educate respirator users on the effects of exposure to harmful air contaminant(s) and the safe use of a respirator.

There may be cases when personnel simply prefer to voluntarily wear respiratory protection for personal reasons, although it may not be required to provide protection from any known airborne exposure. The Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) permits the use of voluntary respiratory protection so long as the respirator use will not in itself create a hazard. Consultation with Environmental Health and

Safety will ensure University Departments meet this requirement as well as assure voluntary respirator use is done in a safe manner. Accordingly, prior to voluntarily wearing a respirator, personnel must first contact Environmental Health & Safety to:

- Verify that exposures do not exceed any advisable or established exposure guidelines.
- Explore alternative work methods that may be more beneficial than respirators in reducing personal exposures.
- Advise regarding respirator selection and any additional requirements.
- Ensure that individuals who voluntarily use respirators are supplied with OSHA [Mandatory Information for employees using respirators when not required under standard 1910.134 \(Appendix D\)](#).

Questions concerning potential biological exposures can be directed to the Environmental Health and Safety Biosafety Officers. Questions concerning potential chemical, dust or mold exposures can be directed to the Environmental Health and Safety Industrial Hygienist or Respirator Program Manager.

Beards or other configurations of facial hair that comes into contact with the respirator face piece seal, will disqualify faculty, staff and students from wearing tight fitting respirators. Other options are available for bearded individuals if respiratory protection is a requirement.

2. **Compliance with Policy:**

Failure to comply with the requirements of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination or expulsion in accordance with relevant University policies.

Questions about this policy should be directed to [Environmental Health and Safety](#).

Procedures

The University of Virginia's Office of Environmental Health and Safety provides Industrial Hygiene and Respiratory Protection services to all organizational levels of the Institution. These services are delivered in an attempt to minimize worker exposures to toxic or hazardous materials, as well as physical hazards. Employees whose day-to-day occupational activities (e.g., construction, renovations, research, etc.) may result in these exposures may arrange for consultative services by contacting Environmental Health and Safety at 982-4911.

See [Respiratory Protection Program](#) for more details.

Related Information

Occupational Health & Safety Code of Federal Regulations:

- 1910.134 – Respiratory Protection Standard.
- 1910.134 (Appendix D) [Mandatory Information for employees using respirators when not required under standard 1910.134](#).
- 1910.1000 Toxic and Hazardous Substances.

Major Category [Safety, Security and Environmental Quality](#)

Next Scheduled Review Sunday, September 7, 2014

Revision History Added Compliance section 7/21/21; Updated 9/7/11, 8/26/08.

Policy Summary

Appropriate controls shall be specified and used to control exposure to harmful air contaminants.

Supercedes Policy Text

Combined: XIV.L.1: Industrial Hygiene; XIV.M.1: Respiratory Protection.

Last modified Monday, February 5, 2024

Approved By Policy Review Committee

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