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RESPIRATORY PROTECTION

I. INTRODUCTION

Respirators are devices that protect workers from inhaling harmful substances. These substances can be in the form of airborne vapors, gases, dust, fogs, fumes, mists, smokes, or sprays. Some respirators also ensure that workers do not breathe air that contains dangerously low levels of oxygen. Respirators should be used when suitable engineering controls do not reduce employee exposure to air contaminants to safe levels or when they are required by the supervisor. Some employees may request to wear respirators to protect themselves against workplace air contaminants.

This regulation applies to all employees who wear either tight-fitting (half or full-face) respirators or dust-mask respirators in the workplace. Firefighters who use Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) and emergency escape respirators shall refer to their department procedures for proper care and use. Employees, except those designated and trained in emergency rescue services, shall not enter immediately dangerous to life and health atmospheres (see definition below).

All respirators used in the workplace shall be National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) certified.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Tight-fitting facepiece:** a respiratory inlet covering that removes contaminants from the air and forms a complete seal with the face, usually with a molded plastic facepiece. A tight-fitting respirator may be half face or full face and have replaceable cartridges.
- B. **Filtering facepiece (dust mask):** a negative pressure particulate respirator with a filter as an integral part of the facepiece or with the entire facepiece composed of the filtering medium.
- C. **Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health (IDLH):** means an atmosphere that poses an immediate threat to life, would cause irreversible adverse health effects, or would impair an individual's ability to escape from a dangerous atmosphere.

III. SELECTION OF RESPIRATORS

Supervisors are responsible for initiating an evaluation of job tasks with Risk and Safety Services to determine if and what type of respiratory protection may be necessary.

Respirators may be necessary if:

- A. Employees work in situations where the level of oxygen is insufficient, or potentially insufficient;
- B. Employees are potentially exposed to harmful levels of hazardous gases or vapors; or
- C. Employees are exposed to other potential respiratory hazards, such as dust, mists, fumes, sprays, and other airborne particulates.

IV. REQUIRED MEDICAL EVALUATIONS

If it is determined that a tight-fitting respirator is necessary or if a tight-fitting respirator is used voluntarily for the work performed, each affected employee shall complete the necessary portions of a Respirator Medical Evaluation Questionnaire (Exhibit 6.01pp). The questionnaire is used to determine if the employee is physically able to perform work and use the equipment selected. After completing the questionnaire, the employee shall drop off or mail the questionnaire to the City's preferred provider for review. The employee will notify their supervisor and Risk and Safety Services that they have submitted a medical evaluation questionnaire for review. The preferred provider will evaluate the questionnaire and provide Risk and Safety with a medical opinion on the employees' ability to safely wear a tight-fitting respirator. If an employee initially is not cleared to wear a respirator, a follow-up medical examination will be conducted by a health care professional with the City's preferred provider that includes any tests, consultation, or diagnostic procedures that are deemed necessary to make a final determination of whether or not the employee can safely wear a respirator in the workplace. It will be the employee's responsibility to schedule the follow-up medical examination. The department will cover the cost of the examination.

V. FIT TESTING

Prior to being permitted to wear a tight-fitting respirator in the workplace all employees must be fit-tested to ensure that the employee has been provided a respirator that is the correct size and shape for their face. After the employee has been approved to wear a tight-fitting respirator by a health care professional, their fit test will be performed. Each fit test will expire one year from the date it was performed and each employee should be responsible for rescheduling additional fit tests if they continue to wear a tight-fitting respirator. Employees who use tight-fitting respirators on a voluntary basis are still required to have a fit test done annually.

VI. USE, MAINTENANCE, AND CARE OF RESPIRATORS

Respirators only provide protection from respiratory hazards when they are used properly. Each employee who wears a respirator in the workplace shall be responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the manufacturer's use, maintenance, and care instructions for each respirator, cartridges, and filters they use.

All respirators shall be stored to protect them from damage, contamination, dust, sunlight, extreme temperatures, excessive moisture, and damaging chemicals. When respirators are put away they shall be stored in a sealed container to prevent deformation of the facepiece and exhalation valve.

Anyone who regularly uses a respirator shall inspect their respirator before each use and during cleaning to ensure they are in good working order. Inspection shall include:

- A. Check for proper respirator function;
- B. Tightness of connections;
- C. Condition of the facepiece, head straps, valves, and cartridges;
- D. Condition of elastomeric parts; and
- E. Ensure proper seal to face.

If a respirator does not pass an inspection it shall be immediately removed from service and replaced or repaired according to the manufacturer's instructions.

VII. TRAINING

Each employee assigned to wear a tight-fitting respirator will be trained annually on:

- A. Why the respirator is necessary and how improper fit, usage, or maintenance can compromise the protective effect of the respirator;
- B. What the limitation and capabilities of the respirator are;
- C. What the procedures are for maintenance and storage of the respirator;
- D. How to recognize medical signs and symptoms that may limit or prevent the effective use of respirator; and
- E. The contents of this regulation.

The supervisor will provide any necessary training on worksite-specific procedures for the safe use of respiratory protection (i.e. where to store their respirator, where to obtain new cartridges, or respirator cleaning supplies).

VIII. VOLUNTARY USE OF FILTERING FACEPIECE

When filtering facepieces (dust masks) are used voluntarily, the employee is expected to abide by the following precautions to ensure that the respirator itself does not present a hazard:

- A. **Read and heed all instructions** provided by the manufacturer on use, maintenance, cleaning and care, and warnings regarding the respirators limitations;
- B. **Choose respirators certified for use** to protect against the contaminant of concern. NIOSH certifies respirators. A label or statement of certification should appear on the respirator or respirator packaging. It will tell the employee what the respirator is designed for and how much it will protect them;
- C. **Do not wear your respirator** into atmospheres containing contaminants for which the respirator is not designed to protect against. For example, a respirator designed to filter dust particles will not protect a person against gases, vapors, or very small solid particles of fumes or smoke; and
- D. **Keep track of your respirator** to ensure no one else mistakenly uses it.

Employees who voluntarily wear filtering facepieces (dust masks) are not subject to the medical evaluation or fit testing provisions of this program.