

## Respirator Use Policy

RS004-3

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the Respiratory Protection Plan and to provide guidance for respirator use and upkeep. This policy, in conjunction with the *Respirator Protection Schedule*, will provide all employees with adequate information on when to use the respirator, proper use, and disposal/ cleaning of the respirator.

### N95 Surgical Respirator

Mecklenburg EMS Agency uses the N95 Surgical Respirator for respiratory protection in the event of transporting a patient with an airborne communicable disease. If the Crew Chief on the ambulance suspects that any patient presents signs and symptoms of an airborne communicable disease, then the N95 mask will be properly donned and worn while patient care takes place. The mask will not be removed until patient care has been transferred to the receiving facility and the crew is not in immediate contact with the patient.

The N95 can be worn to protect against, but is not limited to, all of the following:

- Tuberculosis
- H1N1
- Bacterial Meningitis
- SARS
- Bacteria enriched atmospheres

After use the N95 will be disposed of via biohazard containment. The N95 does not have an expiration date, but will be assessed quarterly for degradation and damage. Damaged or degrading N95 respirators will be removed from the unit, turned into the Operations Support Team, and replaced.

### Training

Training will commence annually and the training will take place as outlined in the *Respiratory Protection Program*. Upon hiring, employees will be placed through an in-depth class on respirator operation and function. Each employee will be proficient in donning and doffing the respirator. The employee will be trained on when to use the respirator, proper use of the respirator, and how to adjust in the incident of a *critical failure*.

All retraining will take place during the annual health fair. This will allow for hands on training and for employees to ask any questions that may need to be answered by Risk and Safety.

### Fit Test

Fit testing will be conducted during new hire orientation and annually for all employees at the health fair. The N95 Respirator will use a Qualitative Fit Test, as outlined in the *Respiratory Protection Program*. There will be a threshold test done, prior to the fit test, to ensure the candidate is able to taste the Bitrex. The test is a pass/fail test. If the employee fails the test, then an alternate respirator will be found for that employee. Failure to comply with annual fit test requirements may result in discipline, PIO/PIPD process.

# Personal Protective Equipment

## Medical and Physical Requirements

OSHA requires a medical health questionnaire be filled out prior to fit testing. Using the answers on the questionnaire, the reviewing Physician will determine if a medical exam is needed. The Physician visit will be paid for by Mecklenburg EMS Agency. The Physician will determine whether or not the employee is medically or physically cleared for respirator use.

## Critical Failures

In the event that a respirator fails to work properly while in a hazardous atmosphere will be considered a *critical failure*. This will be reported immediately to Operations and Safety. An in-depth investigation will take place to determine the cause of the failure and ways to prevent the failure in the future.

**NOTE:** All information contained in this program that refers to N95 use also applies to the use of half faced masks and/or other types of N95 masks.