

**Subject:           Respiratory Protection Program**

**Date:               August 4, 2010**

**Pages: 3**

**Replaces Policy Dated: N/A**

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this program is to set forth uniform policies and procedures concerning the use of respirators for Pinal County employees. All employees who are required to wear a respirator either out of necessity to protect their health or due to departmental policy for a particular operation are included within the scope of this program and must follow its requirements. Employees who are found in violation of this policy will face immediate disciplinary action.

Pinal County understands that the most effective means to control air contaminants is through 1) use of appropriate equipment by properly trained employees, 2) efficient and effective ventilation and 3) careful consideration of how specific materials are used.

**PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION**

This respirator program will be administered and overseen by the Pinal County Risk Manager or his designee. Supervisors shall be primarily responsible for enforcing the respiratory protection program in their work areas. Any changes to this program must be approved by the Program Administrator.

**RESPIRATOR SELECTION**

Pinal County has evaluated the respiratory hazards in the workplace and has based respirator selection on these hazards. Respirators are designed to protect against specific air contaminants. Use of improper respirator may reduce or eliminate the intended protection, resulting in injury or illness.

Employees shall be assigned a respirator which is appropriate for the hazards to which they are exposed. All respirators must be certified by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and shall be used in accordance with the terms of that certification. Also, all filters, cartridges, and canisters must be labeled with the appropriate NIOSH approval label. The label must not be removed or defaced while it is in use. Employees shall not substitute other respirators.

Employees may only wear respirators if the use of a respirator has been approved by the Program Administrator and the type of respirator to be used has been approved by the Program Administrator. Employees may wear their own respirator only after the Program Administrator has determined that the respirator is safe for the anticipated conditions of use and will not in itself create additional hazards. New or modified work processes shall be evaluated as necessary for the need for respiratory protection. Should information indicate that respiratory protection is required, it will be made available immediately to all affected employees and such employees will be included within the scope of the respiratory protection program.

**MEDICAL EVALUATIONS**

Using a respirator may place a physiological burden on employees based on 1) the type of respirator worn, 2) the job and the workplace conditions for which the respirator is used and 3) the health of the employee. In order to ensure that wearing a respirator will not create a potential hazard, all employees to

whom this program applies shall be medically evaluated. The evaluation shall take place prior to the employee being fit tested or required to wear a respirator. The evaluation shall be provided at no cost to

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the employee. Employees may be re-evaluated at the request of the physician, Pinal County, or if there is a significant change in their health status.

**FIT TESTING**

All employees who are required to wear a respirator with a negative or positive pressure, tight-fitting face piece shall be fit tested prior to actual use. Employees will be fit tested with the same make, model, style and size of respirator that they will use. Employees shall be re-tested if they, their supervisor, the Program Administrator, or the physician note any changes in their physical appearance which may possibly affect the fit of the respirator. Such changes include, but are not limited to 1) facial scarring, 2) dental changes, 3) surgery, or 4) obvious weight change. Additionally, employees who wear a tight-fitting face piece respirator will be fit tested on an annual basis.

If, after passing a fit test, the employee notifies the supervisor, physician, or Program Administrator that the fit is unacceptable, the employee will be given a reasonable opportunity to select a different respirator and be re-tested.

Damaged respirators must be repaired only by a qualified person, and only using manufacturer's parts.

**TRAINING**

All employees who are required to wear respirators shall be trained to safely wear and use their assigned respirator prior to actual use. Such training shall include:

- The respiratory hazards to which the employee will be exposed;
- Why respirators are necessary and how improper fit, use or care can compromise the effectiveness;
- The limitations and capabilities of the respirators;
- How to use respirators in emergency situations;
- How to inspect, put on and remove, use and check the seal of the respirator;
- Maintenance and storage procedures;
- How to recognize medical signs and symptoms that may limit the effective use of respirators;
- The general requirements of the OSHA Respiratory Protection Standard, 1910.134.

For those employees who wear respirators voluntarily, basic information, found in Appendix D of the OSHA standard, shall be provided as training material.

**VOLUNTARY RESPIRATOR USE**

Employees may voluntarily wear N95 Disposable Particulate Respirators as they deem appropriate. Such respirators shall be provided to employees at no charge by their departments. Basic information, found in Appendix D of the OSHA standard, shall be provided as training material.

**PROGRAM EVALUATION**

This written respiratory protection program, as well as the workplace, shall be evaluated as necessary by the Program Administrator, to assure that proper respiratory protection is being provided to all affected employees. Any employee who has a concern about the respiratory hazards to which they are exposed, or who has a question about the effectiveness of the respirator he/she is using is required to bring it to the attention of the Program Administrator.

## **RESPIRATOR USE**

Proper use of respirators is essential for the protection of employee health and safety. As previously mentioned, the improper use of a respirator may have serious, potentially fatal consequences. In order to assure employee safety, basic rules of respirator use shall be followed.

- Employees who wear respirators with tight-fitting face pieces must not have facial hair, wear glasses, or otherwise have any condition that interferes with the face-to-face piece seal or valve function.
- Employees must perform a user seal check, per the manufacturer's instructions, each time they put on the respirator.
- Employees must leave the respirator use area to wash their faces or respirators; if they detect vapor or gas breakthrough, changes in breathing resistance or leakage of the face piece; or to replace the respirator or the filter, cartridge, or canister elements.

**Note: Special procedures have been established and must be followed for work within atmospheres which are immediately dangerous to life and health (IDLH). Contact the Program Administrator.**

## **MAINTENANCE AND CARE**

Pinal County and those employees who wear respirators share responsibility for ensuring that all respirators are cleaned, disinfected, stored, inspected and repaired on a regular basis. Departments shall provide respirators that are clean, sanitary and in good working order and it is essential that they be maintained that way.

All respirators must be stored in the containers and locations provided in order to protect them from damage. Additionally, all respirators must be inspected for damage during cleaning and before each use. Any damaged respirator must be removed from service. Employees who are issued respirators and their supervisors are primarily responsible for ensuring that respirators are cleaned, disinfected, stored, inspected and repaired on a regular basis.

Respirators must be cleaned and disinfected at least once per month and as follows:

- Respirators used exclusively by one employee shall be kept clean and disinfected at all times.
- Respirators used by more than one employee shall be cleaned and disinfected before being worn by each different individual.
- Respirators used for emergencies and for fit testing shall be cleaned and disinfected after each use.