



## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Guidance for North Carolina Farms

- The Centers for Disease Control does not recommend that healthy people wear a facemask.
  - Facemasks should be worn by healthcare workers and people taking care of someone infected with COVID-19
  - If you are sick with respiratory illness and visit a healthcare provider, you may be asked to wear a facemask during your visit.
  - Facemasks (N95 filtering facepieces) are meant for single use and cannot be effectively cleaned or sanitized.
- Individuals handling, mixing, loading and/or applying any pesticide must use the PPE specified on the pesticide label. Individuals not in direct contact with the pesticide do not need to wear PPE.
  - All individuals using pesticides requiring respiratory protection must be medically cleared, fit tested and trained to use the specified respirator prior to use. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) (1910.134) and US Environmental Protection Agency's Worker Protection Standard (WPS) require that respirator fit testing be repeated annually or more often, if indicated. More information on regulatory requirements and medical clearance/fit test providers can be found at <http://www.ncagromedicine.org/program-respiratory.php>
  - During the COVID-19 pandemic, the NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services – Pesticide Section has agreed that if individuals were fit tested in 2019 and cannot obtain an annual fit test in 2020, that the 2019 fit test will be accepted for WPS inspections. Individuals who were not tested in 2019 may not use pesticides requiring respiratory protection until they have been fit tested.

For employers subject to OSHA (those having 11 or more employees or those with fewer than 11 employees who maintain a temporary labor camp), the OSHA field offices (e.g. NC Department of Labor) have the discretion not to cite an employer for violations of the annual fit testing requirement as long as certain requirements are met. To learn more about those requirements, visit: <https://www.osha.gov/memos/2020-03-14/temporary-enforcement-guidance-healthcare-respiratory-protection-annual-fit>
  - Individuals who have been fit tested must only wear the respirator that they were fit tested for (e.g., manufacturer, model & size). Sharing of respirators and other PPE is strongly discouraged, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic to prevent cross contamination.
  - Single use respirators (N95 filtering facepieces) must be discarded after 8 hours of cumulative use. If 8 hours is not reached during the first day, the respirator can be used again. The respirator should be stored in an airtight Ziploc bag or container, labelled with the user's name, number of hours used and number of hours remaining. Once the respirator has been used cumulatively for 8 hours it should be discarded. Remember these cannot be cleaned or disinfected.

- Reusable, elastomeric respirators (half or full face) should routinely be cleaned after use according to the manufacturer's guidelines or OSHA standard. Proper cleaning and disinfecting of a respirator requires that it be taken apart, washed and disinfected as follows:

- Remove the cartridges and/or filters attached to the mask. Remove parts of the facepiece that come off easily – head assembly, breathing diaphragms, valves, valve covers and gaskets. Be careful not to lose these.

Cartridges must be discarded after 8 hours of cumulative use. If 8 hours has not been reached, store cartridges and/or filters in an airtight Ziploc bag or container labelled with the user's name, number of hours used and number of hours remaining.

- Wash the respirator, including head assembly and valve covers in warm soapy water and scrub with a soft brush. Rinse breathing diaphragms and gaskets gently.
  - Disinfect face piece by soaking in a mild bleach solution (3/4 tsp. bleach & 1 gallon of water) for 2 minutes.
  - Rinse well in clear water.
  - Air dry or dry with a soft cloth.
  - When dry, put the respirator back together.
  - Store in an airtight bag or plastic storage bag away from pesticides and cartridges. Place a clean paper towel in the bag to help absorb any left-over moisture.
- Other PPE such as safety glasses, goggles, face shields and gloves should also be limited to and labelled for use by an individual user. Clean and disinfect these items according to the manufacturer's instructions. If no instructions are available, clean the items using warm soapy water. Rinse well. Disinfect using a mild bleach solution (3/4 tsp. bleach & 1 gallon of water). Rinse well in clear water and dry with a soft cloth or allow to air dry.
  - Employers are responsible for providing any PPE needed by workers as well as providing medical clearance, respirator fit test and training at no cost to the employee, if applicable. During the COVID-19 pandemic, PPE may not be available for purchase. This can result in employers reassigning workers to tasks that do not require PPE or workers requesting to be reassigned.

## References

1. OSHA 1910.134 Respiratory Protection Standard  
[https://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show\\_document?p\\_id=12716&p\\_table=STANDARDS](https://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_id=12716&p_table=STANDARDS)
2. OSHA Temporary Enforcement Guidance - Healthcare Respiratory Protection Annual Fit-Testing for N95 Filtering Facepieces During the COVID-19 Outbreak  
<https://www.osha.gov/memos/2020-03-14/temporary-enforcement-guidance-healthcare-respiratory-protection-annual-fit>
3. US EPA Worker Protection Standard  
<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-worker-safety/agricultural-worker-protection-standard-wps>
4. Pesticide Education Resource Collaborative (PERC) Respiratory Protection Guide  
<http://www.pesticideresources.org/wps/hosted/PERC-WPS-Respirator-Guide.pdf>
5. NC Agromedicine Institute Respiratory Protection Program  
<http://www.ncagromedicine.org/program-respiratory.php>