



A Union of Professionals

AFT Nurses and
Health Professionals ❤️

Is Your Workplace Ready for COVID-19?

OSHA on **Access to Respirators** During the COVID-19 Outbreak

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The Occupational Safety and Health Administration issued information on how it will enforce the respiratory protection standard for healthcare workers during the COVID-19 outbreak. Because the World Health Organization declared a pandemic, OSHA regulations are relaxed—employers are supposed to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance.

However, OSHA has provided a **guidance document** for employers (healthcare and others) and issued a **temporary enforcement directive** that healthcare employers should make a **good faith effort** to comply with the respiratory protection standard. Under the temporary enforcement directive, OSHA recommends that employers:

- **Use** only National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)-certified respirators;
- **Alternatives** to N95s include N99 or N100 filtering face pieces, reusable elastomeric respirators and powered air purifying respirators (PAPRs);
- **Implement** strategies to optimize and prioritize N95 respirators (see bit.ly/CDCN95);
- **Perform** initial fit tests for each healthcare employee with the same model, style and size respirator that the employee will be required to wear for protection from COVID-19;
- **Tell** employees that the employer is temporarily suspending the annual fit testing of N95 respirators to preserve the supply for use in situations where they are required to be worn;
- **Explain** to employees the importance of conducting a fit check after putting on the respirator to make sure they are getting an adequate seal;
- **Conduct** a fit test if they observe visual changes in an employee's physical condition that could affect respirator fit; and
- **Remind** employees to notify management if the integrity or fit of their N95 respirator is compromised.

Find these resources and more at www.aft.org/coronavirus

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of 1.7 million professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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OSHA is continuing to enforce other existing standards to protect workers, including parts of the PPE standard with rules for eye, face and hand protection. The hazard communication and bloodborne pathogen standards also apply. Workers responsible for cleaning patient rooms, treatment rooms and equipment must be provided appropriate PPE and training to protect them both from contracting the coronavirus and from the strong chemicals used to kill the virus.

The AFT and other unions have petitioned OSHA for a **new, temporary standard** that would give healthcare workers the right to adequate respiratory protection.

- Temporary enforcement guidance from OSHA **[bit.ly/OSHA-temp-fit](https://www.osha-slc.gov/bit.ly/OSHA-temp-fit)**
- Guidance from OSHA on how to protect workers during the COVID-19 outbreak **[bit.ly/OSHA3990](https://www.osha-slc.gov/bit.ly/OSHA3990)**
- For information on reusing N95 respirators, see **[bit.ly/cdcplanning](https://www.cdc.gov/cdcplanning)**.

**Questions or concerns about your health and safety on the job?
Contact our union at 202-716-5510 or smarkle@aft.org**