



Respirator Decontamination Guidance

The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration in late April issued interim guidance on reusing disposable N95 filtering face piece respirators that have been decontaminated. The guidance applies to workplaces where workers rely on respirators to protect against exposure to COVID-19 while caring for or providing treatment to patients.

This guidance no longer applies as of June 7 to Chinese manufactured filtering facepiece respirators granted FDA emergency use authorization and to respirators that have exhalation valves or contain cellulose.

Acceptable decontamination methods

If respiratory protection is required and acceptable alternatives are not available for use in accordance with OSHA's previous coronavirus-related enforcement memoranda, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health is recommending the following methods to decontaminate used face masks:

- Vaporous hydrogen peroxide
- Ultraviolet germicidal irradiation; and/or
- Moist heat (i.e., using an oven)

If the above methods are not available, NIOSH recommends microwave-generated steam or liquid hydrogen peroxide.

Unacceptable decontamination methods

The following methods are not considered acceptable unless research that sufficiently demonstrates the safety and effectiveness of such methods become available:

- Autoclaving
- Dry heat
- Isopropyl alcohol
- Soap
- Dry microwave irradiation
- Chlorine bleach
- Disinfectant wipes, regardless of impregnation (i.e., chemical saturation); and/or
- Ethylene oxide

Employers are encouraged to investigate the effectiveness of any decontamination method used for various filtering facepiece respirator models. Additionally, employers should ensure that any decontamination method does not produce additional safety hazards.

The OSHA guidance is in effect through the current public health crisis. Visit CDA's [Back to Practice Center](#) for additional resources.