

Development of a Code of Practice for Respiratory Protective Equipment

OHS information for employers

NOTICE: On May 3, 2020, [a ministerial order](#) took effect that temporarily amends the OHS Code during the COVID-19 public emergency. This amendment lists specific respirator standards, approved for use in other countries, that employers can use without needing to request an approval.

This amendment addresses the interim situation of domestic shortages of NIOSH-approved N95 respirators, and remains in effect until 60 days after the state of public emergency is over. Other requirements related to respiratory protection still apply, including a successful fit test on all mask types.

What is a Respiratory Protective Equipment Code of Practice?

The Alberta Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Code requires that a Code of Practice (COP) describing the selection, maintenance and use of respiratory protective equipment (RPE) be developed whenever respirators are used at the work site.

This COP must be in writing and should, at a minimum, contain the following elements:

COMPANY HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

The COP must state whether the use of the RPE is mandatory or not.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE RESPIRATORY PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

The employer is responsible for selecting, providing, and maintaining RPE but may

designate a competent worker to undertake this responsibility. The COP must identify the designated person with his/her position and telephone number.

THE SELECTION OF RESPIRATORY PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

When selecting the appropriate RPE, the employer must consider the following seven factors:

- nature of the contaminant;
- concentration or likely concentration of airborne contaminants or biohazardous materials;
- duration or likely duration of worker exposure;
- toxicity of the contaminants;
 - concentration of oxygen in the work area;

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- warning property of the contaminants; and
- need for emergency escape.

The COP must identify the type of airborne hazard generated by each workplace operation (i.e. dust, mist, fume, vapour, gas, oxygen deficiency, or a combination). The specific chemical name of the contaminant(s) or type(s) of bio-hazardous materials should be identified along with the conditions, such as oxygen deficiency, that have initiated respirator use at the work site.

The COP must state the type of respirator that is to be worn for each operation or task requiring one. If an air purifying respirator is used, the respirator and cartridges' make and model number must also be stated.

The selection of RPE must be based on the potential exposure of the worker and the protection factor assigned to the respirator.

Additional guidance on the selection of respirators is given in the following publication: [PPE001 Respiratory Protective Equipment: An Employer's Guide.](#)

Respirators must be approved by the U.S. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) or by another standards setting and equipment-testing organization that is acceptable to Alberta Labour.

MAINTENANCE, CLEANING AND STORAGE

RPE must be clean and must function effectively. A cleaning and maintenance program must be established to help ensure this happens.

The COP must also include cartridge and/or filter change out schedules usually found in the manufacturer's specifications.

When RPE uses compressed breathing air, the employer must ensure that the quality of the breathing air complies with Table 1 of Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Standard Z180.1-00, *Compressed Breathing Air and Systems* and does not contain concentrations of substances that exceed 10 per cent of the applicable Occupational Exposure Limits listed in Table 2 of Schedule 1 of the OHS Code.

The employer must ensure that all workers affected by the code of practice are familiar with it before work begins.

CONDITIONS FOR USE OF RESPIRATORY PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

An employer must ensure that only workers who are free from any physiological or psychological conditions that would prevent them from being able to wear a respirator are permitted to wear a respirator.

The first step is the completion of a health surveillance questionnaire.

Privacy of worker's health information must be protected and must be considered by the employer. If workers indicate that they have a health condition on the questionnaire, they should be assessed by a health care professional.

The COP needs to indicate that health surveillance must be conducted prior to a

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worker wearing a respirator.

The COP should indicate that where the effectiveness of the respiratory protective equipment depends on the facial seal, the employer must ensure that the worker has been properly fit-tested and, when manufacturer specifications require, is clean shaven where the respirator seals against the skin.

The employer must ensure that workers affected by the COP have been trained in it before work begins.

The COP must be readily available at the worksite and should be posted in a location where workers may refer to it.

A sample format for a RPE Code of Practice is provided in Appendix A.

APPENDX A – SAMPLE FORMAT

Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) Code of Practice		
Company Name: <input type="text"/>		
All Workers Affected Must Be Trained in the RPE Code of Practice		
Person Responsible for Selecting and Providing RPE		
Name:	Telephone:	Position:
Condition for Use of RPE		
Health Surveillance: Workers must be medically fit to wear a respirator. (A sample respirator user screening form can be found in Appendix E of CSA Standard Z94.4-02)		
Fit-Testing: RPE that depends on an effective seal for its safe use must be properly fit-tested by a competent (trained) person. (this must be done every two years or when physical conditions change)		
NIOSH Approval: RPE required at the worksite must be NIOSH approved (it will bear a NIOSH approval # e.g. TC-XXXX)		
Clean-Shaven: Workers must be clean shaven where the respirator contacts the face		

Task (e.g. Spray Painting)	Airborne Hazard (e.g. Type of solvent, dust)	Type of Respirator (e.g. half mask)	Respirator Make/Model #	Type of Cartridge (e.g. P100)	Cartridge Make/Model #	RPE Use Mandatory? Y/N

Maintenance/Cleaning/Storage of Respiratory Protective Equipment

Maintenance: Cartridges/filters must be replaced as per the manufacturer's instructions or earlier if smell, taste or irritation from contamination is detected or if there is resistance to breathing. (see the manufacturer's instructions)

Cleaning: RPE should be cleaned after each use. Wipes may be used, but should not be the only method of cleaning RPE (see the manufacturer's instructions)

Storage: RPE must be stored in a manner that will prevent its contamination (e.g. sealed bag (Ziploc™))

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Contact Us

OHS Contact Centre

Edmonton & Surrounding area

☐ 780-415-8690

Throughout Alberta

☐ 1-866-415-8690

Deaf or hearing impaired:

☐ 780-427-9999 (Edmonton)

☐ 1-800-232-7215 (Alberta)

Website

[work.alberta.ca/ohs-contact us](http://work.alberta.ca/ohs-contact-us)

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