

# SAFETY ALERT

November 15, 2022

## Voluntary Use of Dust Masks

A filtering facepiece respirator, also known as a dust mask, is used primarily for protection against nuisance particulate material. For further information regarding use of all types of respirators at LBNL, go to: [PUB-3000 Chapter 44 Respiratory Protection Program](#).

Dust masks may be worn on a voluntary basis without requiring medical approval. For voluntary use of dust mask respirators, the following requirements must be met:

1. A hazard assessment must first be conducted by EHS Division to ensure that the work will not exceed established standards and will not require the use of respiratory protection.
2. Voluntary users of dust masks must complete EHS0311 "Respirator Awareness" training. Trainees will be provided with the required OSHA 29 CFR 1910.134 respiratory protection information.
3. The EHS Division must approve the type of dust mask being used. These are generally NIOSH certified "N95" respirators where the filter media is designed to remove a minimum of 95% of the most filter-penetrating sized particles. The approval is triggered when dust masks are purchased through the eBuy purchasing system.
4. Voluntary users of dust masks are not required to complete a Respirator Medical Evaluation or a respirator fit test.
5. Dust masks must be properly stored to prevent physical damage or contamination if reused. When the dust mask is not in use, it should be placed in an identified Ziploc bag or other suitable storage container. Dust masks that have become soiled, damaged, or difficult to breathe through must be promptly discarded.

Dust masks (particularly when not fit-tested) offer only minimal protection compared to other types of respirators. Even though the filter media may be rated to remove 95% of small particles, this does not mean the wearer is protected from 95% of the particulate material. Any air that leaks in the sides of the mask is not filtered at all. Facial hair can also compromise the fit

of the mask. Dust masks offer no protection against oxygen deficient atmospheres, hazardous gases, or organic vapors.

If you have any questions about possible health hazards or respiratory protection needs in your work area, contact the ETA Safety Manager, Ron Scholtz at X8137.

