

Michigan Technological University

TECHNICAL GUIDE: Voluntary use of dust masks

Revision Date: 9/11/2025

SCOPE:

This Technical Guide applies to all employees and non-employees that voluntarily use a dust mask (filtering facepiece respirator) as part of their job tasks. A dust mask, including an "N95 respirator," may be used voluntarily to avoid breathing nuisance dust. Examples include working in a woodshop, handling uncontaminated soil, or working with small quantities of non-hazardous dust forming powders. Students as well as other non-employees who wish to voluntarily use a dust mask must follow the same procedures outlined here for employees.

Employees who are REQUIRED to wear a dust mask or other types of respirators must comply with additional rules outlined in the Michigan Tech [Respiratory Protection Plan](http://www.mtu.edu/ehs/programs/respiratory). (www.mtu.edu/ehs/programs/respiratory).

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PROCEDURES:

The following must be completed before an employee voluntarily uses a dust mask, and must be repeated on an annual basis or whenever the nature or amount of dust changes.

Supervisor Requirements:

When an employee voluntarily wishes to use a dust mask (or the nature or amount of dust changes) their supervisor must:

- Complete a written hazard analysis and keep a copy in the laboratory or workplace binder. This hazard analysis must confirm:
 - Appropriate engineering controls are being utilized to control dust exposure;
 - The exposure is limited to nuisance dust and there is no potential for exposure to hazardous vapors, liquids, or chemicals;
 - A dust mask, or another respirator, is not required as a protective measure but is being provided for voluntary comfort use only.
- Contact the Department's SafetySkills training coordinator and request that the employee be enrolled in the module "OSHA Voluntary Use of Respirators-Dust Masks."
- Train the employee on the proper selection, storage, and use of a dust mask.

- Make the employee aware of [Michigan Tech's Respiratory Protection Program](#).
- Review with the employee and answer any questions about Appendix D (see next page) of [MIOHSA's Part 451 Respiratory Protection Program](#).

Employee Requirements:

When an employee voluntarily wishes to use a dust mask, the employee must:

- Complete the module "OSHA Voluntary Use of Respirators-Dust Masks " in the University's online training system (SafetySkills).

Employee and Supervisor Documentation Requirements:

Both the employee and supervisor must

- Read, complete, sign, and date the copy of the "Appendix D with signature page and location page" located at the end of this Technical Guide.
- Make a copy of "Appendix D with signature page and location page" for the laboratory or workplace binder and forward the signed originals to Environmental Health and Safety by campus mail.

REGULATIONS / COMPLIANCE:

Regulations on voluntary dust mask use fall under [MIOSHA PART 451. RESPIRATORY PROTECTION](#)

FOR ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE:

Environmental Health and Safety (ehs-help@mtu.edu)

REFERENCES/SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION:

[Michigan Tech Respiratory Protection Plan](#)

Additional information from [Michigan Licensing and Regulatory Affairs](#)

Respiratory Protection Program: Appendix D with signature page and location page

Information for Employees (and Non-Employees) Using Respirators When Not Required Under the Standard

Voluntary use of filtering facepieces (dust masks) is not subject to the medical evaluation, cleaning, storage, and maintenance provisions of the Michigan Technological University Respiratory Protection Program. Employees voluntarily using filtering facepieces must be provided with, read, and understand the information below.

MI-OSHA Part 451 Respiratory Protection: Appendix D Information for Employees Using Respirators When Not Required Under the Standard (Mandatory).

Respirators are an effective method of protection against designated hazards when properly selected and worn. Respirator use is encouraged, even when exposures are below the exposure limit, to provide an additional level of comfort and protection for workers. However, if a respirator is used improperly or not kept clean, the respirator itself can become a hazard to the worker. Sometimes, workers may wear respirators to avoid exposures to hazards, even if the amount of hazardous substance does not exceed the limits set by OSHA standards. If your employer provides respirators for your voluntary use, or if you provide your own respirator, you need to take certain precautions to be sure that the respirator itself does not present a hazard. You should do the following:

1. Read and heed all instructions provided by the manufacturer on use, maintenance, cleaning and care, and warnings regarding the respirators limitations.
2. Choose respirators certified for use to protect against the contaminant of concern. NIOSH, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, certifies respirators. A label or statement of certification should appear on the respirator or respirator packaging. It will tell you what the respirator is designed for and how much it will protect you.
3. Do not wear your respirator into atmospheres containing contaminants for which your respirator is not designed to protect against. For example, a respirator designed to filter dust particles will not protect you against gases, vapors, or very small solid particles of fumes or smoke.
4. Keep track of your respirator so that you do not mistakenly use someone else's respirator.

I have completed the SafetySkills online training module "OSHA Voluntary Use of Respirators-Dust Masks." I have read and I understand the information provided above regarding the limitations and use of particle filtering facepieces (dust masks).

Employee name (print clearly)

Employee Signature

Date (renew annually)

I have completed a workplace hazard assessment and approve the voluntary use of a particle filtering facepiece under Michigan Tech's Respiratory Protection Program.

Supervisor Name (print clearly)

Supervisor Signature

Date (renew annually)

Authorized locations

_____ (name) may voluntarily use a particle filtering
facepiece (dust mask) in the following locations:

Department(s) _____

Building _____ Room number _____

Building _____ Room number _____

Building _____ Room number _____

Building _____ Room number _____

Building _____ Room number _____

Building _____ Room number _____

Building _____ Room number _____

Building _____ Room number _____

Building _____ Room number _____

Building _____ Room number _____

Building _____ Room number _____

Make a copy of "Appendix D with signature page and location page" for the laboratory or workplace binder and forward the signed originals to Environmental Health and Safety by campus mail.