N-95 Filtering facepiece respirators are air-purifying respirators certified by NIOSH to have filter efficiency levels of 95% or greater. N-95 respirators filter out airborne contaminants including dusts, fumes, mists, and microbial agents such as tuberculosis bacteria & flu virus. An N-95 filtering facepiece respirator is the minimum level of protection for wildfire smoke. Respirator use can be beneficial even when the AQI for PM2.5 is 150 or less.

How to Put on N-95 Respirators

1. **Read instructions.** Wash your hands. Hold the respirator in one hand, with nosepiece at your fingertips. Let the straps hang loosely.

2. **Place respirator under your chin,** with the nosepiece up. Hold the respirator with one hand and **pull the top strap over your head.** Rest it on top of head.

3. **Pull the bottom strap over your head** and place it around your neck, below your ears.

4. **Use both hands to mold the nosepiece** to the shape of your nose by pushing inward with your fingertips. Check for secure fit.

5. **Seal check.** Cover respirator completely with hands and exhale sharply. If air blows on your face, readjust respirator (steps 3 & 4).

**Proper Use & Maintenance**

- Choose N-95 respirators certifed for use to protect against the contaminant of concern.
- Read & follow instructions from the manufacturer.
- Check for a tight seal around the face every time you put the respirator on. The more air leaks under the seal, the less protection you receive.
- Keep track of your respirator as to not mistakenly use someone else’s.
- Inspect the respirator prior to use; check for damage and contamination.
- Replace your respirator if it becomes damaged, deformed, dirty, or difficult to breathe through.
- Ask your doctor before using a respirator if you have a lung or heart problem.
- Go to an area with cleaner air, take off the respirator, and seek medical help, if you experience symptoms (i.e. difficulty breathing, dizziness, or nausea).
- Dispose of the respirator in the normal trash, unless it was used in a medical facility or research area with specific disposal procedures, or if there is evidence it may be contaminated.
- Store your respirator properly to protect it from damage, contamination, extreme temperatures, damaging chemicals, and crushing or deforming the facepiece.

- **DO NOT** use surgical masks or other items over your nose and mouth (i.e. scarves, T-shirts, bandannas). They will not provide protection against wildfire smoke.
- **DO NOT** wear your respirator into atmospheres containing contaminants for which it is not designed to protect against. For example, a respirator designed to filter dust particles will not protect you against gases, vapors, or highly toxic materials.
- **DO NOT** attempt to reuse, clean, or disinfect disposable filtering facepiece respirators.
- **DO NOT** allow facial hair, hair, jewelry, glasses, clothing, or anything else to prevent proper placement or come between your face and the respirator.

**Limitations**

Review and follow instructions from the manufacturer on the respirator’s use, maintenance, cleaning, care, and limitations. Also follow instructions from the manufacturer and University regarding medical evaluations, fit testing, and shaving.

N-95 respirators only filter out particulate contaminants. They do not protect you from chemical vapors/gases, oxygen deficient atmospheres, high risk exposures such as those created by aerosol-generating procedures (i.e. bronchoscopy, autopsy) and asbestos handling. Facial hair reduces the effectiveness of N-95 respiratory protection, but shaving is not required for voluntary use. If you have facial hair, you may wear a loose-fitting powered air purifying respirator.

**Required Use**

N-95 respirators may be required as personal protective equipment, depending on your job responsibilities. Regarding wildfire smoke, you must wear a respirator when the current AQI is greater than 500. For required use, you must obtain 1.) Medical Evaluation and clearance, 2.) Training on an annual basis, and 3.) Fit testing for proper fit (annually). To ensure adequate protection, do not wear respirator models and sizes for which you have not been fit-tested by EH&S.