

# KENTUCKY LABOR CABINET

## DEPARTMENT OF WORKPLACE STANDARDS

### Information Bulletin regarding H1N1 Influenza Virus



November 2009

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends the use of several hygienic practices to reduce the potential of contracting the novel H1N1 influenza virus which include:

- Frequent hand washing;
- Covering your mouth when coughing;
- Refraining from touching your eyes, nose, or mouth; and
- Staying home if sick.

You may find more specific information about the H1N1 virus from [CDC](#), the [Cabinet for Health and Family Services](#), and the [Kentucky Division of Emergency Management](#), and the [Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#) (OSHA) at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu>;

<http://healthalerts.ky.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

<http://kyem.ky.gov/NR/exeres/F8960660-60DE-40C5-A8DA-A5E5B3C7C90C.htm>; and

<http://www.osha.gov/h1n1/index.html>.

In their October 14, 2009 document entitled, “[Interim Guidance on Infection Control Measures for 2009 H1N1 Influenza in Healthcare Settings, Including Protection of Healthcare Personnel](#),” the CDC recommends N95 respirators for healthcare workers to protect against H1N1. The Kentucky OSH Program reminds employers the Respiratory Protection requirements found at 29 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) [1910.134](#), adopted by 803 Kentucky Administrative Regulation 2:308, are applicable. It is important to note that 29 CFR 1910.134 differentiates between voluntary and required respirator use and has requirements addressing both. Additionally, OSHA and the Kentucky OSH Program differentiate between a surgical mask and a respirator.

While this information bulletin focuses on the use of personal protective equipment, an employer should follow the hierarchy of controls listed in the CDC’s interim guidance to minimize the need for personal protective equipment.

Recognizing that some facilities may experience shortages of respiratory protection equipment, the CDC interim guidance addresses the prioritization of N95 respirator use during a shortage situation. Conservation measures are provided that an employer may implement to reduce the consumption of disposable N95 respirators and extend their use to ensure that respirator supplies will be sufficient to treat patients where respirator use is required. Additional respirator conservation methods that an employer may consider implementing before a shortage situation

occurs at his or her facility include, but are not limited to:

- Consider using non-medical supply chains, such as safety equipment suppliers to supply N95 respirators. These respirators provide the same particulate protection as those provided by medical distributors.
- While exploring other types of suppliers, consider the variety of N95 respirators available for use in work involving close contact with H1N1 patients. For example, if an institution's policy is to order only fluid-resistant or surgical N95 respirators, other N95 respirators not designated as surgical may be used where contact with splashes or sprays of body fluids is not anticipated as long as they are National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) certified. Surgical N95s are required when needed to protect against splashes or sprays of bodily fluids and may also be required for infection control during surgery, but are not required in situations where fluid contact is not an issue. Employers should also consider using non-disposable elastomeric facepiece respirators or powered air purifying respirators which can be reused and disinfected.
- Consider using a non-surgical or standard N95 respirator for most patient-care activities including support activities such as housekeeping in patient rooms. All respirators must be approved by NIOSH, must be used in compliance with the conditions of their approval, and must function at a level of protection equal to or greater than an N95 respirator.
- Consider re-donning disposable N95 respirators. While disposable respirators should never be shared between users, they may be used between patients if proper infection control measures are implemented which includes washing the hands after touching the respirator. Respirators that become contaminated with body fluids or other hazardous substances or that may be used during aerosol-generating procedures should be immediately discarded. Wet or dirty respirators should also be discarded immediately.
- Consider reusing disposable filtering facepiece respirators. Respirators may be removed, stored, and re-donned by an employee if the employer has established procedures for this type of use, provided appropriate facilities for storage, and trained employees in how to remove, store, inspect, and re-don the respirator. Employees must also be trained in how to recognize when a respirator must be discarded.
- Consider using a faceshield to extend the use of a disposable N95 respirator. This would be an appropriate measure as long as the faceshield does not interfere with the function of the respirator. Kentucky OSH regulations require that respirators be used as approved by the NIOSH and must not be altered.
- Use stockpiled respirators. Stockpiled respirators may not be the same make or model as respirators used at your facility. In order to meet Kentucky OSH regulations, fit-tests must be performed when different models of respirators are used. Do not wait until you have zero respirators before the request is made to relinquish respirators from the stockpile. This will ensure that fit-tested respirators are available while fit-testing

employees for the new model of respirator acquired from the stockpile.

Employers may find it beneficial to document the following information, at a minimum, when addressing respirator shortage issues.

- Actions taken to conserve respirators including which conservation measures were implemented, description of the action taken, and the training conducted regarding the conservation action.
- Attempts to obtain respirators including model number(s), date of requests, number of respirators ordered, and anticipated delivery dates.
- When requested from the stockpile, the agency and contact person, and if the request was accepted or denied.

This information may change as new developments occur. Please contact an OSH Standards Specialist at (502) 564-3070 with any questions.