

What is a Respirator Program?

A Respirator Program, also known as a Respiratory Protection Program (RPP), is a set of rules and regulations enforced by the Washington Department of Labor and Industries (also known as L&I). These rules and regulations are in place to keep workers from becoming sick or injured because of workplace exposure to hazards. One significant hazard comes from viruses that spread through the air when a sick or contagious person coughs, talks or sneezes. Spreading viruses through the air is a respiratory hazard.

Why does my LTC setting need this program? In healthcare and long-term care (LTC) settings, N95s help protect workers from inhaling respiratory hazards. If you use an N95, then you must have a respirator program. This program helps to keep your facility in compliance with L&I's worker protection regulations. Also, it helps you keep your workers healthy so they can care for your residents and clients.

The Six Steps of the Respirator Program: These are the steps you need to create your own RPP. Each step must be in place to comply with L&I and protect your workers and residents.

1. Written Program The written program is your policy or procedure on respiratory protection. Your written program must have all the elements including who is responsible for the program, medical evaluations, training, fit testing, and record keeping. Your workers must know where to find your written program to refer to if they forget what to do.

2. Respirator Medical Evaluation A respirator medical evaluation is a list of questions that determines if it is safe for a worker to use an N95. Medical evaluation questions must be reviewed by a medical professional who gives the employer a paper saying it is safe for the worker to wear an N95 respirator. Answers to the medical evaluation questions must remain confidential. The employer only needs to know if the worker can use an N95, and when workers will need to retake the respirator medical evaluation.

3. Fit Testing Respirator fit testing is a procedure that tests how well an N95 fits a worker's face. A good fit prevents inhaling a respiratory hazard. Any person trained to conduct fit testing can perform the fit test. Workers must wear the same exact style N95 they were fit tested to. Like the training, fit testing is also an annual requirement. If a worker gains or loses weight, or if they have



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had some changes to their face such as plastic surgery or dental work, then they must get fit tested again, even if it's before the yearly due date.

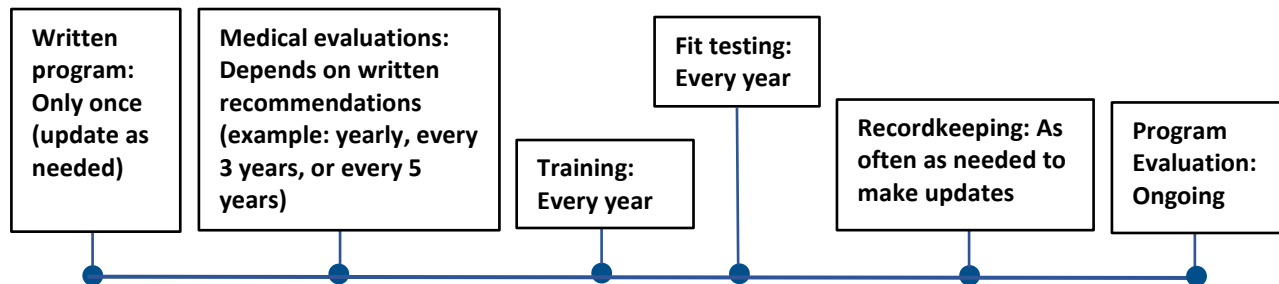
- 4. Respirator Training** Everyone who wears an N95 must have training before use. The training explains to your workers why the N95 is important, when and how to use it, where to store it, along with other requirements. This will provide knowledge on how to stay safe when caring for a resident in isolation or quarantine. Workers must take your facility's respirator training every year.
- 5. Recordkeeping** You must keep the following RPP records: An up-to-date written copy of your RPP, current fit test records, training records, and medical evaluation letters.
- 6. Program Evaluation** You must check on your workers to see if they are using the N95 correctly, and update your program if there are any regulatory changes.

How do I get started?

Visit our website at www.doh.wa.gov/ltrcpp to learn how to we can help you get your program started or email us at HAI-FitTest@doh.wa.gov.

Also, we offer free Lunch and Learn sessions on the first and third Wednesday of the month, at noon. Check our website for topics.

How often do I need to repeat the six steps?



Resources:

- **DOH's RPP Website:** <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ltrcpp>
- **Request an L&I Consultation:** <https://lni.wa.gov/safety-health/preventing-injuries-illnesses/request-consultation/>
- **WAC 296-842 Safety Standards for Respirators:** <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=296-842>