I. BACKGROUND

The protection of the University’s faculty, staff and students from breathing potentially harmful air contaminants in the workplace is a critical concern for the administration. While respiratory protection is best achieved by front end engineering controls (i.e. enclose or confine an operation that generates harmful contaminants) there may be occasions where the use of a respirator is the only feasible method to eliminate or reduce potential air contaminants exposures down to acceptable levels. University employees that utilize respiratory protection are included in this procedure.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of these respiratory protection procedures is to provide the University community with the necessary information to understand respiratory protection requirements and the means to receive respirator training from the Environmental Health and Safety (EHS).

III. KEY DEFINITIONS

**Air-purifying respirator:** Means a respirator with an air-purifying filter, cartridge or canister that removes specific air contaminants by passing ambient air through the air-purifying element.

**Dust Mask (Filtering Facepiece):** Means a negative pressure particulate respirator with a filter as an integral part of the facepiece or with the entire facepiece composed of the filtering medium such as an N95.

**High efficiency particulate filters (HEPA):** Means a filter capable of trapping and retaining at least 99.97% of all particles of 0.3 micrometers in diameter.

**Immediately dangerous to life and health (IDLH):** Means an atmosphere that poses an immediate threat to life, would cause irreversible adverse health effects, or would impair an individual’s ability to escape from a dangerous atmosphere.

**National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH):** Means the organization with authority for testing and certifying respirators.

Respirator: Means a device worn by an individual that is intended to provide respiratory protection against inhalation of airborne contaminants or oxygen deficient air. All respirators are approved by NIOSH.

Qualitative fit test: Means a pass/fail test to assess the adequacy of respirator fit that relies on the individual’s response to test agent.

Self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA): Means an atmosphere-supplying respirator for which the breathing air source is designed to be carried by user.

III. APPLICABILITY

The procedures outlined in this document apply only to UH employees. Contractors, sub contractors, vendors and any other parties are expected to follow the OSHA respiratory protection standard found in 29 CFR 1910.134 when doing any work behalf of the University that requires the use of respirators.

IV. PROCEDURES

UH employees seeking respiratory protection for any reason should inform their supervisor. After verifying the potential respiratory hazards the supervisor should contact the EHS (713) 743-5858 during University business hours and request assistance.

The EHS will assess the need and reach a consensus with the respirator wearer on the specific type of respirator (dust mask, cartridge or other) to be worn. Then the wearer will be evaluated to determine if he/she is medically qualified to wear a respirator. The first step of this process is complete the OSHA Respirator Medical Evaluation Questionnaire. Then completed questionnaire is then reviewed by a licensed physician.

Depending upon the review outcome the wearer may be cleared by the physician to wear the desired respirator. However, further evaluation such as a pulmonary function test or physical exam may be requested by the reviewing physician. Any costs associated for the services of the reviewing physician will be paid by the wearer’s department. The OSHA respiratory protection rules require the employer to supply employee’s respirators, medical evaluations and fit testing at no charge to the employee.

Once the wearer has medically qualified to wear his/her desired respirator, the employee will return to the EHS. A general respirator use training presentation will be given and then a qualitative fit–test using the employee’s assigned air purifying respirator will be conducted.
Fit-tests will only be given to employees who show documentation of medical qualification to wear a respirator (Example: any employee is allowed to view general respirator use training presentation, but only medically qualified individuals will be fit-tested)

Upon completion of the initial medical evaluation, training presentation, and fit-test the employee will then annually re-qualify to keep wearing a respirator. This will require a repeat of the process, medical evaluation, general safety presentation and fit test.

Wearers should maintain their assigned respirators in accordance with the manufacturer’s recommendations and never share their respirator with someone else.

When issued a new respirator the wearer must be re-fit-tested regardless of annual requirement.

The EHS will maintain records of training, medical qualification and fit-tests.

V. REFERENCES