A. PURPOSE

1. The purpose of the Respirator Protection Program is to ensure the protection of our employees, through the proper use of a respirator, from respiratory hazards they may encounter. Respirators are an effective method of protection against hazards when properly selected and worn. Respirator use is encouraged even when exposures are below the Permissible Exposure Limit (PEL) set by Cal/OSHA, and they provide an additional level of comfort and protection for employees. However, if a respirator is used improperly or not kept clean, the respirator itself can become a hazard. Sometimes, employees may wear respirators to avoid exposures to hazards, even if the amount of hazardous substance does not exceed the PEL. If the employer provides respirators for voluntary use, or if the employee provides their own respirator, they need to take certain precautions to be sure that the respirator itself does not present a hazard. 

*Please note that this is a voluntary program.*

B. SCOPE

1. This Respirator Protection Program applies to all Departments within the Science/Mathematics (SM) Building where employees who work with hazardous substances would benefit from the use of a respirator.

C. RESPONSIBILITY

1. The South Orange County Community College District’s Risk Management Department is responsible for this program in the Division work area and has authority to make decisions to ensure the success of the Respirator Protection Program.

2. The Chemical Hygiene Officer, or designee, has the responsibility to halt any operation when danger is perceived to any individuals in a location or work area in the Division where respirators may be used.

D. PROGRAM ELEMENTS

1. The Chemical Hygiene Officer, or designee, will approve the purchase of any respirators or respirator equipment from budget accounts assigned to the Division.

2. Respirators selected for use should be certified to protect against hazardous contaminants to which Division personnel may be exposed. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is the agency that certifies all respirators. A label or statement of certification should appear on the respirator or respirator packing. It will detail what the respirator is designed to do and how much it will protect the person using it.

3. The user will be instructed and trained by an appropriate Safety Officer in the proper use of respirators and their limitations. Training should provide the individual an opportunity to handle the respirator, have it fitted properly, test its face piece-to-face seal, wear it in...
normal air for a period of time to provide familiarity, and wear it in a test atmosphere. **Retraining will be required annually, including fit testing.** The individual may also be required to view any safety videos concerning the proper use of respirators. It will be at the discretion of the Chemical Hygiene Officer, or designee, to determine if retraining, at any time, is necessary.

4. Respirators should not be worn when conditions prevent a good face seal. Such conditions may include a growth of beard, sideburns, a skull cap that projects under the face piece, or temple pieces on glasses that prevent or break the face piece-to-face seal. To assure proper protection, the face piece fit will be checked by the wearer each time the respirator is used. The wearer will perform negative and positive fit checks prior to each use.

5. Respirators will be assigned to individuals for their exclusive use. Users will keep track of their respirator and appropriate cartridges so that they do not mistakenly use someone else’s respirator.

6. Read and follow all instructions provided by the manufacturer on use, maintenance, cleaning and care, and warnings regarding the respirator’s limitations. Respirators will be cleaned after each use.

7. Respirators will be stored in a sealed plastic bag in a safe and accessible location.

8. Respirators will be routinely inspected prior to and after use by the wearer. Worn or deteriorated parts will be replaced.

9. Do not wear the respirator in atmospheres containing contaminants against which your respirator is not designated to protect. For example, a respirator designed to filter dust particles will not protect the user against gases, vapors, or very small, solid particles of fumes or smoke. *Please note that organic vapor cartridges may contain activated charcoal and have a finite shelf life with an expiration date. Dispose of charcoal cartridges if they exceed the expiration date. In addition, respirator wearers should date their cartridges with indelible ink upon each new use.*

10. Persons will not be assigned to tasks requiring the use of respirators unless it has been determined that they are physically able to perform the work and are trained in the use of the equipment. This will require an annual spirometry test as needed. If any person knows of any physical condition that would interfere with the use of the respirator, they must notify the Chemical Hygiene Officer, or designee, of that physical condition. No one will be required to use any respirator that they feel unable to use in a safe manner.

11. South Orange County Community College District will not assume responsibility for the physical condition of any person using a respirator. If an individual is uncertain about their physical health or condition, that individual must consult with their Dean or the Risk Management Department prior to the use of a respirator.
12. South Orange County Community College District will retain written documentation and information regarding training, medical evaluations, fit testing, and the respirator program. This information will facilitate employee involvement in the respirator program, assist SOCCCD in auditing the adequacy of the program, and provide a record for compliance determinations by Cal/OSHA.

E. REVIEW AND UPDATE
1. This Respirator Protection Program will be reviewed and updated annually.