



ASSP Coronavirus Q&A: Follow-Up With Tim Fisher

March 23, 2020 | Edited Transcript

Welcome to a special episode of the ASSP Safety Standards and Tech Pubs Podcast. I'm your host, Scott Fowler.

COVID-19 presents a major challenge to safety professionals as they strive to take proper steps to protect their workers and prevent the spread of the disease. We've received many questions about the virus and how safety professionals can use their skills to help flatten the curve on this global pandemic. Today, we are talking with Tim Fisher, CSP, CHMM, CPEA, director, standards development and technical services for ASSP, to answer several of those questions.

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| Scott Fowler | Can employers mandate use of N95 or other respirators in the workplace to protect against COVID-19 transmission - outside of a healthcare setting (e.g., manufacturing)? If so, how would an employer verify that an APF 10 respirator is suitable for protecting noninfected workers? |
| Tim Fisher | <p>An employer is required to provide a safe and healthful workplace. Employers should choose remediation techniques based on the hierarchy of controls. It should be noted that many countries have asked that N95 respirators be reserved for use by healthcare professionals.</p> <p>In regard to an employer verifying if use of an APF 10 respirator is appropriate for use, we suggest conferring with a local healthcare professional and an industrial hygienist. It is important to note that any decision you make needs to be based on a suitable risk assessment, and remediation is then based on the results of the assessment.</p> |
| Scott Fowler | If an employee reports to an employer (outside of the healthcare sector) that s/he acquired COVID-19 on the job, must this be put on the OSHA 300/301 logs? |
| Tim Fisher | <p>Our view is that privacy clause under recordkeeping would still apply, but this is still a fluid issue so we will continue to review. If there are new updates or guidance, we will share that information with ASSP members.</p> <p>Visit OSHA's Injury and Illness Recordkeeping and Reporting Requirements page for more information (https://www.osha.gov/recordkeeping/)</p> <p>You can also find more information at: www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/standards.html</p> |
| Scott Fowler | Should we be doing respirator fit testing? Will OSHA waive that? |
| Tim Fisher | At this point, we have not seen any guidance from OSHA waiving the fit testing requirements for industries other than for healthcare. ASSP will continue to review |





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| | <p>information related to this issue. If we see any developments or new guidance, we will share that information.</p> <p>You can find OSHA's guidance on fit-testing and healthcare on its website. There is also a related post on ASSP's website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• https://www.osha.gov/news/newsreleases/national/03142020• https://www.osha.gov/memos/2020-03-14/temporary-enforcement-guidance-healthcare-respiratory-protection-annual-fit• https://www.assp.org/news-and-articles/2020/03/17/osha-provides-temporary-guidance-for-respirator-fit-testing-in-healthcare |
| Scott Fowler | What is everyone doing with Appendix D related to voluntary masks? |
| Tim Fisher | <p>Our best guidance here is to direct you to OSHA's video on the overall issue of Append D and voluntary masks. You can find that at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• www.osha.gov/video/respiratory_protection/voluntaryuse_transcript.html <p>We also point to this OSHA statement: <i>"Remember, voluntary use is only permitted when your employer has determined that there is no airborne hazard that would require the use of a respirator."</i></p> |
| Scott Fowler | Is anyone aware of a coordinated effort to find surplus N95s for health care? Can ASSP promote providing surplus N95s to hospitals or otherwise as needed? Or supporting emergency manufacturing onshore? |
| Tim Fisher | <p>This is an issue we have been following and several members have contacted us about donatable PPE equipment because of the March 17, 2020, White House request that construction companies donate their stocks of N95 respirator masks.</p> <p>ASSP applauds the national effort to support healthcare facilities, but we strongly encourage you to contact your local hospitals and healthcare facilities first to confirm that they are accepting donations of N95 masks and if so where donations should be delivered.</p> <p>In addition, these facilities are not interested in receiving of out-of-date equipment and or equipment that has been damaged or compromised. Such equipment cannot be used and only creates an additional burden through disposal.</p> |
| Scott Fowler | What are the most important risk matrices to track for our company to come up with a composite score? For example, regional threats, high risk family members, high exposure risk jobs, etc.? |
| Tim Fisher | <p>We have not yet seen a template or checklist specific to COVID-19 and composite scores. In fact, if any OSH professional has something specific, we would be pleased to review and share this resource.</p> <p>Several public health models are available, and we suggest you review CDC's</p> |





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| | <p>Interim US Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Persons with Potential Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Exposures: Geographic Risk and Contacts of Laboratory-confirmed Cases (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/risk-assessment.html)</p> <p>In addition, European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control offers this document:</p> <p>RAPID RISK ASSESSMENT: Novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic: increased transmission in the EU/EEA and the UK—sixth update (March 12, 2020) (https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/RRA-sixth-update-Outbreak-of-novel-coronavirus-disease-2019-COVID-19.pdf)</p> |
| Scott Fowler | Are there any directives from NIOSH or OSHA on personal air monitoring in the midst of coronavirus, given that you'd pretty much invade a person's breathing zone? Certainly, there's no social distancing here. |
| Tim Fisher | <p>There have not yet been any changes in policy or directives addressing air monitoring. If we see any developments or new guidance, we will share that with ASSP members.</p> <p>The current OSHA document on COVID-19 does not address the guidance/directive question you are asking about.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf |
| Scott Fowler | Regarding isolation and removal of workers and a fourteen-day isolation time period, where can people find more information on those recommendations? |
| Tim Fisher | <p>In regard to the terms "remove" and "isolate," we are referring to the language in the OSH COVID-19 document.</p> <p>Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19 (https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf)</p> <p>In regard to the question about a required fourteen-day isolation time period.</p> <p>Please be aware that the advice from CDC is changing rapidly. Attached is a reference from CDC that should be of assistance and addresses general industry workers:</p> <p>https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html</p> <p>And, below for those with interest is the document addressing healthcare workers:</p> <p>https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/hcp-return-w</p> <p>Here is the explanation in the CDC risk assessment document;</p> |



“Note: The public health management recommendations made above are primarily intended for jurisdictions not experiencing sustained community transmission. In jurisdictions not experiencing sustained community transmission, CDC recommends that post-exposure public health management for asymptomatic exposed individuals continue until 14 days after the last potential exposure; however, these decisions should be made based on the local situation, available resources, and competing priorities. These factors should also guide decisions about managing symptomatic exposed individuals.”

Here is the link to the full document: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/risk-assessment.html>.

Scott Fowler

Thank you for coming on, Tim. COVID-19 is of course a major concern for safety professionals, so I hope that our listeners will use the information you've provided to help protect their workers and prevent the spread of this virus.

You can find a recording of our recent coronavirus ask the expert Q&A with ASSP President-Elect Deb Roy, and related information on COVID-19 at assp.org/coronavirus.

Thank you for listening to this special episode of our podcast. Be sure to subscribe wherever you get your podcasts. You can also connect with us at assp.org, and follow us on Twitter @ASSPSafety. We'll see you next time.

