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USE OF N95 AND OTHER RESPIRATORS BY HEALTH CARE FACILITIES LOCATED IN SMOKY AREAS

Should hospitals, clinics, or long-term care facilities located in smoky areas consider putting N95 masks or other respirators on patients or staff to protect them from health effects associated with fire smoke?

• Facilities should keep indoor air as clean as possible by:
  o Keeping windows and doors closed;
  o Closing fresh air intakes and recirculating indoor air;
  o Ensuring that air handling system filters are installed properly;
  o Using air system filters with higher-efficiency filtration where possible;
  o Using portable air cleaners (with HEPA filtration) adequately sized for rooms, if available;
  o Not using ozone-generating equipment including air cleaners and ionizers;
  o Minimizing indoor sources of air pollution (such as vacuuming or floor polishing).

• We do not advise putting N95 masks or other respirators on persons whose health status is compromised or who are elderly, because the increased resistance associated with breathing through a respirator may pose a health risk to the wearer.

• Use of N95 masks or other respirators by employees or other healthy persons may reduce exposure to particles in fire smoke if used properly and would not likely pose a health risk to wearers. However, how closely the respirator seals to the face will determine its effectiveness at reducing exposure. Without conducting a fit test, the level of protection for the individual wearer is unknown.