



Instead of Limiting Existing PPE, Give Us Better Alternatives!

BETTER PPE IS THE ANSWER!

With protective equipment in short supply, healthcare employers could have sounded a battle cry to get frontline staff the protection they need.

Instead, they quickly raised a white flag, declared defeat, and started forcing staff to work without protection, use less protection, or reuse single-use equipment.

There are alternatives that all employers should be using at this critical time! We need to promote them and push the hospitals to adopt this critical equipment.

While surgical N95 filtering face piece respirators have become a standard in healthcare, they are just one type of respiratory protection available that have been approved by the FDA and OSHA.

Employers need to start showing that they are serious about protecting frontline staff. They need to extend their focus beyond disposable respirators and get off the “reuse it or sanitize it” bandwagon. They should secure and deploy all of the alternate respirator options available, especially the ones that get us away from unlimited dependence on single-use equipment.

Contact your NYSNA representative for more information on PPE or other topics related to the COVID-19 crisis. Your Rep can reach out to the NYSNA Health & Safety Staff for further technical assistance as needed.

Here are three other options employers could be turning to at this time:

1. Industrial filtering face piece (FFP) respirators.

The FDA has approved the use of non-healthcare FFP equipment in healthcare settings during the crisis. Millions of respirators in this category are available in workplaces and through vendors. They provide the same protection as those currently used in healthcare. (Some are equipped with exhalation valves, however, so cannot be used where an aseptic environment is required).



2. Elastomeric, cartridge respirators.

These are reusable, so they eliminate the replacement issue with N95s. They do have to be fit tested. They can make it more difficult to be heard when speaking, so might be limited to certain kinds of tasks.



3. Powered Air Purifying Respirators (PAPRs).

This equipment was used during the Ebola crisis in 2014. Most hospitals have some of these units on hand. Although tight-fitting PAPR head pieces do require fit testing, loose fitting PAPR hoods do not. They provide higher levels of protection than do the N95s or elastomeric respirators. Because they supply filtered air, they can be more comfortable to wear. Durable equipment like PAPRs have an extended service life, and because most of the components can be sanitized and reused, they also eliminate the supply problem with N95s.

