



STATE OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Corning Tower The Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza Albany, New York 12237

Richard F. Daines, M.D.
Commissioner

James W. Clyne, Jr.
Executive Deputy Commissioner

October 5, 2009

Dear Administrator;

The Department of Health is preparing for the upcoming seasonal influenza season coupled with the Novel H1N1 influenza virus. In completing tasks necessary to maintain resident health and safety, nursing home employees may be required to utilize respiratory protection when performing certain procedures. When doing so, the respirator identified as effective for seasonal influenza and the Novel H1N1 is an N-95 respirator. It is important that facilities stay current with DOH guidance and be prepared in advance for responding appropriately. Check the Health Commerce HPN system regularly.

In an effort to ensure nursing home employees are adequately protected, the Department contracted with the New York State Occupational Health Clinic Network to provide assistance in the assessment of the respiratory protection required for the nursing home staff and to identify completeness of the current written plan for the respiratory protection program at the nursing home.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and Public Employees Safety and Health (PESH) regulations anytime an employee is required to use respiratory protection the employer must have a complete respiratory protection program. The program should include:

- Written respiratory protection program specific to the employer's workplace that covers
 - equipment selection
 - medical evaluations for employees assigned to use respirators
 - annual fit testing procedures
 - training of employees assigned to use respirators
- Designated program administrator to oversee the program
- Provision of equipment to employees

The Occupational Health Clinic Network was started in 1987 to meet the increasing demand for medical services related to the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of occupational disease. There are eleven clinics located across New York State. The Occupational Health Clinic Network is a resource for health care providers treating patients with potential work-related illnesses and injuries as well as providing assistance on issues such as worksite health and safety. Their treatment teams of physicians, nurses, industrial hygienists and social workers have assisted providers in assessing and managing their patients' work-related conditions.

The Department will be collecting specific nursing home information from you to better understand the technical assistance needed by your facility. The Occupational Health Clinic Network assigned to your geographic area will receive the survey information including your facility contact information to initiate the technical assistance

It is the Department's expectation that after you have worked with the Occupational Health Clinic you will have a written respiratory protection plan, a training program for your staff and will know what respirators are required for use and when to use them. In addition, the Occupational Health Clinic will be available to provide medical evaluations and fit testing services if needed (additional fees required).

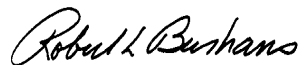
If you have any further questions please contact David Brusio, Division of Residential Services at 518-408-1267 or Eileen Franko, Dr.P.H, Director for the Bureau of Occupational Health at (518) 402-7900 for questions regarding the Occupational Health Clinic Network.

Sincerely,



Mark L. Kissinger
Deputy Commissioner
Office of Long Term Care

Sincerely,



Robert L. Burhans
Director
Office of Health Emergency Preparedness