

**SAMPLE: POST-CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS  
WORKSHOP SESSION SUMMARY  
NIEHS NATIONAL TRAINERS' EXCHANGE  
MARCH 2007**

**1. Session Title and Presenter's Contact Information:**

"Training to Protect Healthcare Workers from Airborne Infectious Diseases"

Facilitators:

Mark Catlin and Bill Borwegen  
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Bernie Mizula, Facilitator

**2. Workshop Summary**

This round table discussion covered the current issues and problems around the use of respiratory protection in healthcare (surgical masks vs N95 or better respirators, fit testing, etc) and the role of good worker training to empower healthcare workers to improve preparedness for pandemic flu and other airborne disease in their facilities.

**3. Methods**

The workshop consisted of two parts. First a small group activity method (SGAM) exercise on disposable N95 respirators was conducted to introduce common problems with proper respirator use and programs in healthcare. A brief introductory exercise had shown many of the participants not familiar with the healthcare industry. The small group activity method is a structured procedure that allows participants to share information in multiple ways - through worker to worker exchanges, worker to trainer exchanges and trainer to worker exchanges (the traditional exchange of school).

The second part was a powerpoint presentation covering the lack of a culture of safety that is widespread in healthcare and opportunities to instill a safety culture to improve the use of respiratory protection and other hazard control methods.

# Disposable N95 Respirators

## 4. Main Points

Many hospitals continue to have inadequate respiratory protection programs to protect their employees from airborne infectious diseases, including flu, avian flu and pandemic flu. There is much resistance in the healthcare industry to basic elements of a proper respirator program, including annual fit testing and proper selection and use. Many in healthcare consider a surgical or procedure mask to be similar to a NIOSH approved N95 respirator, the most common type used). Efforts to overcome these barriers to effective programs to protect healthcare employees must continue.

### Responses from the participants

Those unfamiliar with the healthcare industry were surprised at the lack of knowledge and questioning of respirator use by healthcare employers. Participants familiar with healthcare agreed that the industry is mostly inexperienced in respiratory protection issues.

## 5. References

“IOM Workshop on Personal Protective Equipment for Healthcare Workers in the Event of Pandemic Influenza: The perspective of healthcare workers on the front line” by Bill Borwegen, Occupational Health and Safety Director, Service Employees International Union

## 6. Workshop Handouts/ Resources

Handouts: SEIU Education and Support Fund SGAM Activity: Disposable N95 Respirators (electronic file attached)