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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Information on Respiratory Protection for Wildfire Cleanup

As homeowners and construction workers clean up damage done by the fires, questions about the capabilities and the correct usage of particulate respirators are increasing.

Personal protection in the aftermath of a wildfire is an important consideration during the cleanup process. Selection of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) depends on both anticipated hazards and the task to be performed. If the general public makes a personal decision to use respirators against the soot and ash particles that result from wildfires, a government-certified particulate respirator, such as an N95, N99, N100 disposable respirator, can be used to help reduce wearer exposure to these particles.

Respirators that have received the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) approval have been tested to have at least 95 percent filtration efficiency against submicron particles, which includes the size ranges of smoke and soot. NIOSH-approved respirators are available from many sources including large home center stores, paint stores, hardware stores, safety suppliers, and industrial supply houses. When properly used these respirators provide more protection than unapproved dust masks. NIOSH-approved respirators will have printing on the respirator including the manufacturer's name, model number and the certification level (e.g. N95).

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Individuals participating in clean-up efforts should know that wearers of N95 respirators can get a good fit by following the instructions. Consumers should also be aware of basic information on the use and limitations of respirators. The following guidelines are offered for non-occupational users of respiratory protection during clean-up:

- Fit of the respirator to the face is very important. Following the fitting instructions provided with the respirator is important to help you reduce your exposure to soot and ash. If a respirator does not fit properly, airborne contaminants will penetrate (enter underneath) the facepiece seal. Fitting instructions are included in product packaging or are available from the respirator manufacturer.
- Anything that comes between the respirator and your face will make the respirator less effective by interfering with its fit. Men should be clean shaven when using the respirator. Hair, jewelry and clothing should not be between your skin and the respirator.
- For greatest effectiveness respirators need to be worn during the entire time you are cleaning up around soot and ash.
- Understanding proper use and limitations of the respirator you select, including practice putting the respirator on and wearing it is recommended.
- Disposable N95 respirators are designed for adults.
- Individuals with a compromised respiratory system, such as asthma or emphysema or those with a history of heart disease should consult a physician before wearing a respirator. If you experience dizziness, irritation or other

distress while wearing a respirator, go to a clean area and remove your respirator.

Consult your doctor to determine whether or not you should continue use of the respirator.

- Respirators may help reduce exposure to airborne contaminants, but they don't eliminate the risk of exposure, symptoms and sickness.
- Anyone who has any asbestos, any lead, or a large area of mold in their house and might be exposed to these, or other hazardous materials, should hire a contractor and contact their local department of health.
- N95 respirators or other particulate respirators are not designed or certified for use against hazardous levels of gases and vapors, such as carbon monoxide, or for areas with low oxygen levels. Other types of respirators exist for these types of hazards. However, it is recommended that homeowners with these types of hazards should hire a contractor and contact their local department of health.
- Employers and workers using respirators must use them in accordance with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA's) regulation 1910.134, General Respiratory Protection, or your state OSHA program, which requires a full respirator program including comprehensive training, medical evaluation and fit testing.

For more information about proper respirator selection or use, please visit

www.3M.com/Wildfires or to call 3M Technical Assistance at 1-800-243-4630.

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