



# Comfort Mask 8500 Discontinuation

## *Frequently Asked Questions and Answers*

**Q: Why is 3M discontinuing the 3M™ Comfort Mask 8500?**

**A:** As a global leader in respiratory protection, 3M offers a wide variety of products and works continuously to develop new technology and product enhancements. In addition to technology development, the changing marketplace and regulatory environment drive us to constantly review our product portfolio, updating some products, discontinuing others and introducing new products to meet the varied needs of our customers and to distinguish ourselves from competition.

**Q: When will the 8500 no longer be available?**

**A:** As of June 30, 2003, we will no longer be accepting orders for the 8500 comfort mask.

**Q: Now what should I order?**

**A:** While there is not a direct replacement for the 8500, 3M does offer a wide variety of NIOSH-approved products such as the new 3M™ Particle Respirator 8000 N95 (coming August 1, 2003), our classic 3M™ Particulate Respirator 8210 N95, the three panel 3M™ Particulate Respirators 9210 N95 and 9211 N95, and the 3M™ Particulate Respirator 8511 N95. The new economical 8000 particle respirator is recommended by 3M for light duty or short duration applications where exposure to particles may be a concern, as in light sanding, sweeping or working in other dusty environments. The 8210 particulate respirator is an industry benchmark for N95 protection. 3M recommends it for work settings that involve moderate workplace applications such as, grinding, sanding, bagging, woodworking, foundry applications, and certain other applications where airborne particles are generated. 3M also offers several other N95 respirator options. The unique design of the 9210 and 9211 N95 particulate respirators provide comfort and portability with a three-panel, flat-fold design. These products are individually packaged and allow for easy dispensing. Also, the 9211 has the patented 3M™ Cool Flow Exhalation Valve. And finally, our 8511 particulate respirator provides comfort with a soft feel on the face and, like the 9211, contains our patented Cool Flow exhalation valve that helps to provide cool, dry comfort. As N95 approved particulate respirators, these products are not approved for use in applications where the potential exists for exposure to gas and vapor as in paint spray applications.

**Q: What is the difference between the 8210 and 8000?**

**A:** The 8210 has been designed with more comfort features than the 8000. The 8000 particle respirator is a good value for light duty or short duration tasks such as sanding and sweeping. It has two straps attached at a single point and an adjustable nose clip. For moderate workplace applications such as grinding or sanding, the 8210 is a better value providing greater worker comfort in longer wear situations. It has two straps, dual attachment points, soft nose foam as well as an adjustable nose clip. Both are NIOSH-certified N95 respirators.

**Q: What is the difference between a nuisance dust mask and a respirator?**

**A:** Typically a nuisance dust mask has a single strap, is not government approved, and has no information printed on it. It can help provide relief from irritation to the nose, mouth and throat caused by non-toxic dusts. It is intended for use in non-regulated situations such as sweeping or mowing grass. Typically a NIOSH-approved respirator will have two straps and display a reference to NIOSH and an abbreviation of the approval category (e.g., N95) printed on the respirator. Designed to meet government performance standards, respirators contain more efficient filter media than nuisance dust masks and offer a better face fit. They help provide protection against certain hazardous substances found in industrial and manufacturing settings that can be generated by operations such as grinding, sanding, woodworking, bagging and other dusty applications.

**Q: How is the 8000 different from an unapproved "nuisance dust mask?"**

**A:** The 8000 particle respirator is a NIOSH N95 government-approved respirator, meaning it achieves at least 95% filtration efficiency when tested with non-oil-based particles approximately 0.3 microns in size. A nuisance dust mask is not government approved and does not have this level of filtration efficiency. Typically a nuisance dust mask has a single strap, is not government approved, and has no information printed on it. They can help provide relief from irritation to the nose, mouth and throat caused by non-harmful nuisance dusts.

**Q: Do all N95 respirators provide the same minimum filtration?**

**A:** Yes, all government NIOSH approved N95 respirators achieve at least 95 % filtration efficiency when tested with non oil-based particles approximately 0.3 microns in size.

**Q: So are all N95 disposable respirators the same?**

**A:** All half facepiece disposable N95 respirators can help reduce airborne contaminant exposures when properly fitted and used. However, not all N95 respirators provide the same comfort. Some have different attributes, which may affect fit and worker comfort levels. For example, some respirators seem harder to breathe through because they have a higher-pressure drop. Other respirators may or may not have nose foam, which may help achieve a better fit. Disposable respirators with exhalation valves help reduce heat and moisture buildup inside the shell, making them more comfortable to wear for longer periods of time or in hot environments.

**Q: Can I use the 8000 for all the same applications as the other 3M N95 products?**

**A:** Yes, they are all N95 approved. However, for moderate and longer duration tasks, 3M recommends using the 8210, 9210, 9211, or the 8511 since they have more product features for greater worker comfort in longer wear situations.

**Q: What are the regulatory requirements for disposable respirators in a voluntary use situation?**

**A:** Provided the employer has documented that there is no potential for exposure to air contaminants above the PEL (permissible exposure limit) and does not require employees to wear respirators, then employees can ask to wear a disposable respirator (e.g., 3M particulate respirators, N95) voluntarily. The only requirement of the employer is that they provide the employee with the information found in Appendix D of the OSHA Respiratory Protection Standard (29 CFR 1910.134). For details, please visit OSHA at: [www.osha.gov/](http://www.osha.gov/).

**Q: What is the benefit of an exhalation valve?**

**A:** The 3M™ Cool Flow Exhalation Valve, which is a feature of the 9211 and 8511 particulate respirators, provides several benefits:

1. Respirators with a valve are easier to breathe through (have a lower pressure drop) because exhalation is made easier through the valve.
2. Because the exhalation valve allows moisture and heat to be expelled, there is less heat and moisture buildup inside the shell making it more comfortable to wear for longer periods of time or in hot environments. These benefits make these products a good choice for hot or humid environments or in situations that involve longer wear times or heavy work rates.

**Q: How long can I wear these respirators?**

**A:** Dispose of respirator if it becomes damaged, soiled, or breathing becomes difficult.

**Q: Where can I get more information on these products?**

**A:** You can find more information on this website. Additionally you can contact NIOSH at: [www.cdc.gov/niosh/homepage.html](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/homepage.html).