



University of Cambridge

UBS Wearing of Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) Policy

This policy applies to all University Biomedical Services (UBS) staff working with laboratory animals. For health and wellbeing reasons, the University takes a risk-based approach to minimise the exposure of UBS staff to laboratory animal allergens (LAAs).

Guidance Note EH76 issued by the Health and Safety Executive highlights the health risks from exposure to laboratory animal allergens and the precautions required to adequately control exposure, as required by the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH).

COSHH regulations require employers to prevent or, if this is not reasonably practicable, adequately control exposure to hazardous substances, including animal allergens.

Laboratory animal allergy (LAA) is an allergic hypersensitivity response which may develop as a result of exposure to animal allergens.

The main, but not the only source of animal allergens are urine, fur, hair, dander, saliva, faecal pellets, and serum. The principal route of exposure is inhalation of airborne animal allergens. Direct skin and eye contact can also be a common route of exposure.

RPE must be worn where the risk assessment identifies there is a risk of exposure which cannot be controlled by local exhaust ventilation (LEV) and/or other control measures.

For example, it is reasonably predicted that 'open cage' activities pose the greatest risk of exposure and therefore RPE must be worn.

These high-risk activities include, but are not limited to, all work in 'conventional' caging type areas, individual ventilated cage (IVC) changing, fur clipping, cage scraping or washing, waste disposal and cleaning or maintenance of any filters or ventilated extract systems (such as cage change stations and IVC air handling units).

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and associated safety documents must be adhered to when working with laboratory animals. These contain instructions and guidance on the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and RPE that must be worn for the activity described.

A risk assessment *may* identify exemptions to wearing RPE, for example, when working with certain species or during some activities such as performing /assisting surgery. However, these exemptions must be risk assessed, documented, and agreed with the appropriate UBS Facility Manager.

To reduce exposure to animal allergens, respiratory protective equipment (RPE) must be selected and fitted correctly.

Policy Expectations

The following must be adhered to:

All applicable staff working in a UBS facility will be offered individual powered RPE at appointment.

If there is a specific occupational health issue or a respirator required, this must be discussed and agreed upon with the Facility Manager.

If a known or increased risk of sensitivity to LAAs is identified, Occupational Health will provide specific health advice and/or enhanced monitoring of an individual. Such advice must be discussed with the appropriate Facility Manager and adhered.

Powered RPE

Powered RPE comes in a variety of makes, models and options. However, the principles are the same for each. Once adjusted and fitted to the individual, powered RPE must be used for the complete duration of the activity identified. *Powered RPE is suitable for wearers with facial hair.*

Powered RPE does not require a face fit test.

To ensure that the equipment is in good working order, prior to and after use, powered RPE must be appropriately inspected, maintained and cleaned. This must be carried out and recorded as per the local facility document. This will include checks for clear vision, battery level, filter condition and efficient airflow. Manufacturer instructions provide details on how to undertake the checks required for specific models. The UBS Facility Manager will provide powered RPE record sheets and will ensure they are being completed.

When not in use, powered RPE must be stored in a clean environment ready for the next operational period.

Disposable RPE

To use disposable RPE (FFP3 masks), a quantitative face fit test must be undertaken using a Porta Count machine. The face fit test is specific to a particular make and model of mask. Fitting instructions are provided at the face fit test and are available on the packaging of the mask. Further guidance and information on fitting and wearing disposable RPE is provided in UBS Facilities on posters and by the Facility Manager.

Once fitted, the mask must be secured in place for the complete duration of the activity. Masks should be appropriately fitted and maintained for a session or working shift as per the manufacturer instructions and then disposed of correctly. During breaks in use, if safe to reuse, disposable RPE must be stored carefully and correctly to maintain their cleanliness and effectiveness.

Where the appropriate disposable mask is temporarily unavailable, the Facility Manager must be consulted to discuss alternative RPE.

CleanSpace Works (HALO) Powered Air Purifying Respirators (PAPRS)

CleanSpace PAPRs are designed and certified to provide high-level respiratory protection when used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. A quantitative face fit test must be undertaken using a Porta Count machine.

To ensure that the equipment is in good working order, prior to and after use, the equipment must be appropriately inspected, maintained and cleaned. This must be carried out and recorded as per the local facility document. This will include checks for battery level, filter condition and efficient airflow.

Manufacturer instructions provide details on how to undertake the checks required for specific models. The UBS Facility Manager will provide record sheets and will ensure they are being completed.

When not in use, PAPR must be stored in a clean environment ready for the next operational period.

Additional Resources

All UBS staff working with laboratory animals are advised to read and be familiar with the following Occupational Health and Safety Service documents:

- Information for staff and students: Allergy to Animals, Insects and Arthropods
- Checking the Fit of your Facemask: A guide for using disposable 'dust' masks

Declaration

I have read and understood the UBS Wearing of Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) Policy and agree to adhere to it.

Print name:

Signed:

Date:

Powered RPE: Yes/No

Alternatives:

CleanSpace Works (HALO): Yes/No

Disposable facemask Make/Model face fit test passed.