Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Respirator Use

1. PURPOSE. The purpose of this SOP is to ensure the protection of horticultural staff from respiratory hazards through the proper use of respirators. Respirators are to be used when engineering controls (e.g. ventilation or substitution of less toxic materials) are not feasible or when required according to product labels.

2. SCOPE. Provide directions for the training, use, maintenance, and storage of respirators used for horticultural purposes.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES.

   A. Natural Resource Management Supervisors: Review policy and procedures with horticultural staff and during recruitment for new staff to ensure understanding and compliance. Supervisors will ensure each employee has appropriate training in respirator use, the availability of appropriate respirators and parts, provides adequate storage facilities and ensure proper respirator equipment maintenance. Supervisors must be aware of tasks requiring the use of respiratory protection, and ensure all employees in such work use the appropriate respirators at all times.

   B. Natural Resource Staff: It is the responsibility of each respirator wearer to read and understand this SOP and wear his/her respirator when and where required and in the manner in which he/she was trained. Respirator wearer must report any malfunctions of the respirator to his/her supervisor immediately. The respirator wearer must guard against damage to the respirator, clean/maintain the respirator as instructed, and store the respirator in a clean, sanitary location.

   C. Failure to comply with this SOP may result in disciplinary action.

4. PROCEDURES.

   A. Issue of Respirators: Respiratory protection devices are issued by the Rare Plant Program Manager or Nursery Supervisor. Respirators are issued only to those employees who have been fit tested and received appropriate training in its use. Only new cartridges, cannisters, or filters shall be used when a respirator is first issued. Respirator types shall be chosen by supervisors appropriate to the health hazards posed by contaminants.

   B. Respirator Use: Respirator protection is authorized and issued for the following personnel: Workers performing operations documented to be a health hazard and those unavoidably required to be in the immediate vicinity where similar levels of contaminants are generated.
C. Supervisors shall inventory and inspect respirators periodically. They should coordinate initial employee fit testing at an approved facility. Supervisors shall generate and implement respirator cartridge change out schedules, and develop procedures for regular respirator cleaning and inspection.

D. Staff will be trained on the following:
   - Nature and degree of respiratory hazard.
   - Respirator selection, based on the hazard and respirator capabilities and limitations.
   - Donning procedures and fit tests.
   - Care of the respirator, e.g., need for cleaning, maintenance, storage, and/or replacement.
   - Use of respirator.

No employee is allowed to wear a respirator until he/she has been trained. Supervisors shall coordinate and schedule initial training with an authorized facility or vendor certified in respiratory equipment training.

E. Each employee must perform positive and negative user seal checks on tight fitting respirators before each use.

F. Sealing Problems: No employee is allowed to wear a respirator, in the workplace for either routine or non-routine task if he has facial hair which interferes with the seal and/or normal functioning of the exhalation valve of the facepiece. If eyeglasses or goggles must be worn with a respirator, they must not adversely affect the seal of the facepiece.

G. Staff shall notify their supervisors immediately if any respirator damage or defects are found on respirators in their custody.

H. Certifications and Forms: Clearance forms and certifications shall be done annually. Records will be kept in the OANRP training database with exceptions for any confidential medical information.