

ANNOUNCEMENT of SPIROMETRY TRAINING PROGRAM CHANGES for NIOSH PARTNERS

For nearly 30 years, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has approved training courses (<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/spirometry/>) for spirometry technicians who test workers in the cotton industry. Administrative responsibility for this program was mandated in 1978 by the OSHA Cotton Dust Standard (29 CFR 1910.1043). NIOSH approves courses after carefully reviewing faculty qualifications, facility and equipment capabilities, and course design and content. Students who successfully complete course requirements and pass standardized written and practicum examinations are awarded a certificate of completion, which *until now*, has remained active indefinitely. Though completion of a NIOSH-approved spirometry course is not required by OSHA for technicians outside of the cotton industry, many companies require their medical staff to complete these courses since “NIOSH approval” provides an assurance that the course will adequately teach the basic principles of spirometry.

29 CFR 1910.1043 does not mandate spirometry refresher courses. However, there is compelling evidence from the National Institutes of Health’s Lung Health Study and the National Center for Health Statistics’ NHANES III study, that repeat training of technicians and implementation of comprehensive quality control programs are important in assuring continuing accuracy of spirometry data. Professional societies such as the American Thoracic Society and the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine also recommend periodic (every 3 to 5 years) spirometry refresher courses to update technicians on changes in pulmonary function testing standards and to reinforce awareness of problems that are encountered during spirometry testing.

Acting on these recommendations, on January 1, 2009, NIOSH will begin approving dedicated one-day NIOSH-Approved Spirometry Refresher Courses. The Refresher Course curriculum will include reviews of: 1) the most recent ATS/ERS testing standards and guidelines, 2) testing contraindications, 3) technical procedures and instrumentation requirements, 4) effective use of real-time displays, 5) common spirometry testing errors and applicable corrective actions, 6) procedures for proper infection control, and 7) interpretation guidelines. NIOSH-Approved Spirometry Refresher Courses will only be offered by sponsors of the full NIOSH-approved training course (<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/spirometry/sponsors.html>). A link to the Refresher Course calendar will be posted on the NIOSH Spirometry Training Course web page (<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/spirometry/>) after the courses become available.

NIOSH-Approved Spirometry Refresher Courses will be offered only to students who have successfully completed the full NIOSH-Approved Spirometry Training Course. Prior to enrollment in a NIOSH-Approved Spirometry Refresher Course, students must demonstrate eligibility by providing a copy of a valid NIOSH-Approved Spirometry Training certificate. If a certificate is lost or misplaced, the student must obtain a duplicate copy from their course sponsor, since NIOSH does not maintain a roster of student names or copies of their course certificates.

NIOSH SPIROMETRY PROGRAM CHANGES: Effective January 1, 2009, certificates of successful completion issued by sponsors of NIOSH-Approved Spirometry Courses must indicate an expiration date 5 years from the date of the course. Technicians who wish to maintain a valid NIOSH-Approved Spirometry Course certificate must complete a NIOSH-Approved Refresher Course (or repeat the full Course) every 5 years.

- Technicians whose NIOSH-Approved Spirometry Course certificates are dated January 1, 2006, or later must successfully complete a NIOSH-Approved Spirometry Refresher Course (or repeat the full Course) within 5 years of the date of their initial course to maintain a valid NIOSH-Approved Spirometry Course certificate.
- Technicians whose NIOSH-Approved Spirometry Course certificates are dated January 1, 2000, through December 31, 2005, must successfully complete a NIOSH-Approved Spirometry Refresher Course (or repeat the full Course) by December 31, 2010, to maintain a valid NIOSH-Approved Spirometry Course certificate.
- Technicians with NIOSH-Approved Spirometry Course certificates dated prior to January 1, 2000, are not eligible to take a NIOSH-Approved Spirometry Refresher Course. To maintain valid certificates, these students will need to successfully repeat the full NIOSH-Approved Spirometry Course.

Inquiries about the NIOSH-Approved Spirometry Training Program may be sent directly to:

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