



# Innovative Work Health Solutions

## Who We Are

We are a team of occupational health and safety professionals with 50+ years of combined experience in injury prevention and management programs. Our group includes physicians credentialed in occupational and emergency medicine, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, case managers, physical therapists, ADA coordinators, ergonomics specialists and other key professionals with experience in a variety of occupational settings. More importantly, we have a highly focused, value-driven approach to our programs and services for employers, carriers, and the individual worker. We lead each discussion both internally and customer-facing with an effort to deliver a clearly defined value for our relationships.

We are unique in our innovative approach to considering employee health, injuries, claims, and costs as separate but connected aspects of an overall occupational health program. We welcome the opportunity to discuss your employee health and safety program needs.



Members of the Innovative Work Health Team attend the Maryland Workers' Comp Conference.



## Inside this issue

- Who We Are ..... 1
- Best Practice in Hiring..... 2
- Return to Work FCE..... 3
- ER vs Urgent Care..... 4
- Respirator Fit Test..... 5
- Annual Fit Tests..... 6
- ADA Accommodation..... 7
- Pulmonary Function Testing..... 8

## Special points of interest

- Why is it important to perform respirator fit tests?
- Who can help maintain OSHA certification?





## BEST PRACTICES IN HIRING A KEY COST SAVINGS FOR EMPLOYERS

Getting the right workers for the right positions is a key strategy for employers to avoid costly work injuries and protect prospective employees from harm. Research consistently demonstrates that properly designed, professionally implemented and managed employee screening programs can reduce the risks and costs associated with workplace injuries.

A study conducted by a large industrial employer tested this principle of practice. A total of 220 new hires participated in the study. The group was divided in half, with 110 participating in a professionally

designed screening. The remaining 110 employees did not. No other differences were found in the hiring practices or the post hire work to be performed. The two groups were tracked for post hire injuries and the resultant costs over a 4-year period. Age, gender, ethnicity, and pre hire disability status were also tracked and, using chi square analysis, no differences were found between the two groups on these variables. Of the screened group, 92 (83%) passed the post hire screen and 18 (16%) did not. Only those passing the screen were placed in the jobs to begin work. (Continued below)

*“Matching employees to jobs for which they are physically qualified is a critical element of safe hiring practices.”*

### EEOC Best Practices

1. Ensure that management and all employees know EEO laws.
2. Implement a strong EEO policy with executive level support.
3. Promote an inclusive culture.
4. Develop communication.
5. Evaluate practices.
6. Audit selection criteria.
7. Make HR decisions with EEO in mind.
8. Enforce an anti-harassment policy.
9. Respect cultural and racial differences in the workplace.
10. Be professional in conduct and speech.

(Continued from above)

Differences were shown between the screened and unscreened groups related to both the rate and severity (cost) of injuries sustained during the 4-year study period. The employee group that was screened and, therefore, presented with a known ability to perform required physical demands, had a very low (1%) injury rate. The group that did not undergo screening had a significantly higher (23%) injury rate. A closer look at the two groups revealed that of those employees who were injured, the cost *per injury* in the screened group was substantially less.

These results reinforce support for well-designed employee screening programs to reduce occupational injuries. Matching employees to jobs for which they are physically qualified is a critical element of safe hiring practices. Employers can reduce both direct and indirect costs by screening employees and matching employees to work tasks they have the ability to safely perform.

When most successful, this is a collaborative effort between human resources and occupational health professionals. Engaging expert support to develop and implement an employee screening program is important to maintain compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Equal Employment Opportunities guidance.

Things to consider in your approach include:

1. Development of accurate and up-to-date physical demand analysis
2. Designing and validating acceptable criteria for screening
3. Standardizing screen administration and protocols
4. Job specific content-based methodology
5. Employee Accommodation

# The Return to Work Functional Capacity Evaluation

## Work Ability Versus Job Demand Match & Case Specific Referral Answers

Innovative Work Health's Return to Work Functional Capacity Evaluation is a proprietary program that offers:

- Objective testing of patient work ability versus job specific physical demands
- PATIENT SAFETY FIRST test administration hierarchy
- Detailed functional information to compliment physician medical data for development of return to work case decisions
- Opportunity for patients to learn safe work abilities and limitation through guided participation in work related tasks
- Consideration of effort level in context of defining work abilities
- Analysis of functional ability for exploration of employment accommodation as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act

Our system is designed to provide direct answers for referral questions for case by case support of physicians, case managers, employers, and patients using an evidence-based medical model as defined by the American Medical Association Guide to the Evaluation of Functional Ability. Our reports include:

- Percentage of patient functional ability versus work demands for clinical decision making and progress reporting
- Job placement recommendations with work accommodation, as needed
- Reliability and validity profile
- Psychometric testing for comparison of subjective reports to objective findings



## FAQs

### ***What is an FCE?***

A Functional Capacity Evaluation (FCE) is a comprehensive assessment that measures an individual's physical abilities to perform work-related tasks. It is often used to determine if a person can safely return to work after an injury or illness. The evaluation typically involves a series of tests that assess strength, endurance, flexibility, and other physical capabilities relevant to the individual's job.

### ***Why are FCEs Important?***

- **Ensuring Safety:** They help determine whether an individual can safely perform their job duties without risking further injury.
- **Guiding Return-to-Work Decisions:** FCEs provide objective data that helps employers, healthcare providers, and insurance companies make informed decisions about an employee's return to work.
- **Supporting Legal and Insurance Claims:** FCEs offer documented evidence of an individual's physical capabilities, which can be essential in workers' compensation or disability cases.
- **Tailoring Rehabilitation Programs:** The results of an FCE can guide physical therapists in designing a rehabilitation program that targets specific areas of need to enhance recovery and job readiness.

## ER VS URGENT CARE: IS THERE REALLY A DIFFERENCE?



A workplace accident disrupts everyone's day. Getting your employee the right care quickly is essential for their well-being and your business continuity. While emergency rooms (ERs) might seem like the go-to option, urgent care centers are often a better fit for work-related injuries, both recordable and non-recordable. Here's why:

### Faster Care, Less Wait:

- ERs prioritize life-threatening emergencies. Your employee might wait for hours, even with a sprained ankle or minor cuts.
- Urgent care centers specialize in non-life-threatening conditions. They typically have shorter wait times, getting your employee seen and treated quickly. This minimizes lost productivity and ensures a faster recovery.

### Cost-Effective for WorkComp Claims:

- ER visits come with hefty bills. These high costs can significantly impact your workers' compensation premiums.
- Urgent care centers offer more affordable upfront costs. This translates to significant savings for your business and the workers' compensation provider.

### Specialized Treatment and Recordkeeping:

- Many urgent care centers have staff experienced in occupational medicine. They understand the nuances of work injuries and can provide targeted treatment plans to get your employee back to work safely and efficiently.
- We understand recordable vs. non-recordable injuries. Our staff can properly document and report injuries in accordance with OSHA guidelines, ensuring accurate recordkeeping for your business.

### Streamlined WorkComp Process and Continuity of Care:

- Urgent care clinics are familiar with workers' compensation claims. We can handle the paperwork and filing efficiently, minimizing delays in getting your employee the care and benefits they deserve.
- We can provide continuity of care. If your employee requires additional treatment or follow-up care, we can refer them to the appropriate specialist, ensuring a smooth transition for their recovery.
- ERs might not be familiar with workers' compensation or have established referral networks. This can lead to delays and fragmented care.

### When is the ER the right choice?

- Life-threatening emergencies (severe bleeding, head injuries).
- Complex fractures requiring immediate intervention.

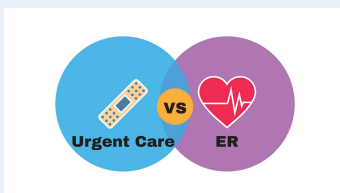
**For most recordable and non-recordable work-related injuries, however, an urgent care center offers a faster, more cost-effective, and work-focused solution.** This translates to quicker recovery for your employee, less disruption for your business, and proper recordkeeping for regulatory compliance

**Remember:** Always consult with your workers' compensation provider for specific guidelines in your area.

By choosing our urgent care center for your work-related injuries, you ensure your employees receive the right care, quickly and efficiently, while minimizing costs and maximizing their return to work.

### Did You Know???

1. More than 30% of all ER cases are non-emergent.
2. The average UC visit costs between \$70-\$125 vs the average ER visit which typically exceeds \$1300.
3. Wait time averages for UC are between 15-25 minutes vs averages in the ER that exceed 2.5 hours.
4. 90% of ER visits could have been treated at Urgent Care.





## Respirator Fit Testing What It Is, Why You Need It, and What You Can Expect

Respirator Fit Testing is important across a wide variety of occupations. In healthcare, a properly fit respirator protects the healthcare provider as well as the patient from spreading germs. In other industries, the respirator protects the wearer from breathing air contaminated with harmful dusts, fogs, fumes, mists, gases, smokes, sprays, or vapors. There are many types of respirators, so finding the right one and making sure it fits appropriately is important.

### What Is Fit Testing?

Fit testing is the method for finding the respirator that fits your face and making sure it provides a tight seal to help keep you protected.

*"Your respirator must be fit tested before you use it for the first time and then once each year."*

### What is a Respirator Fit Test?

A fit test is conducted to verify that a respirator is both comfortable and correctly fits the user. Fit test methods are classified as either qualitative or quantitative. A qualitative fit test is a pass/fail test that relies on the individual's sensory detection of a test agent, such as taste, smell, or involuntary cough (a reaction to irritant smoke\*). A quantitative fit test uses an instrument to numerically measure the effectiveness of the respirator. The benefits of a fit test include better protection for the employee and verification that the employee is wearing a correctly-fitting model and size of respirator.<sup>1</sup> Higher than expected levels of exposure to a contaminant may occur if the respirator has a poor face seal against the user's skin, which can result in leakage.

(Continued from above)

### Why Do You Need To Be Fit Tested?

Fit testing helps ensure you wear the right respirator to protect you from atmospheric contamination and prevent you from spreading germs to others. Employers are expected to provide you with adequate PPE, including a respirator that fits correctly. Sizes of respirators are not the same across models or brands.

If you need to wear a respirator, like an N95 FFR, to perform your job, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires your employer to follow the Respiratory Protection Standard (29 CFR 1910.134). Respirator fit testing is just one important part of an employer's Respiratory Protection Program.

Any respirator (N95 FFR or elastomeric) must be fit tested before the first use if your job exposes you to germs or other atmospheric contaminations. After that, your employer should test your fitting with the respirator every year and whenever something happens that could affect the seal. The respirator seal may be affected by physical changes, including weight loss or gain, having or growing facial hair, or dental procedures that change the shape of your face.





# Why are annual FIT TESTS required?

OSHA requires annual fit testing: 29 CFR 1910.134

## Administrator



Time for your annual fit testing!



It usually only takes 15–20 minutes.

## Worker



Can we do this another day? I've got so much to do.



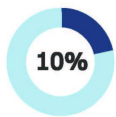
I'm busy. You're busy. Why is it necessary to do this EVERY YEAR?

## Bottom line...



If your respirator doesn't fit, it can't efficiently protect you. **OSHA requires annual fit testing: 29 CFR 1910.134**

## NIOSH Facts



**NIOSH** research confirms the need for annual testing: 10% of subjects failed a fit test after 1 year using the same make, model, and size respirator.



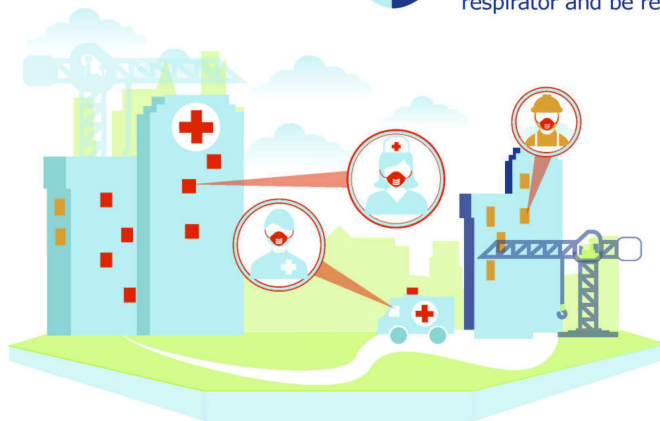
**NIOSH** research also suggests that those who have lost > 20lbs should prioritize getting fit tested again right away. Other facial changes requiring fit testing include significant weight gain, extensive dental work, scarring, or cosmetic surgery.



Respirator fit **CAN** change over time. If your respirator doesn't fit, it doesn't work.



If the respirator fit is unacceptable, the worker must be given the opportunity to select a different respirator and be retested.



## FIT TESTING

Over 3 million United States employees, in approximately 1.3 million workplaces, are required to wear respiratory protection. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) (29 CFR 1910.134) requires an annual respirator fit test to confirm the fit of any respirator that forms a tight seal on the wearer's face before it is used in the workplace. This ensures that users are receiving the expected level of protection by minimizing any contaminant leakage into the facepiece. The following are some frequently asked questions about respiratory protection and fit testing.



Sources: OSHA Fit Testing Procedures 1910.134, Appendix A, [https://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show\\_document?p\\_table=STANDARDS&p\\_id=9780](https://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=9780)  
New NIOSH Study Supports the OSHA Annual Fit Testing Requirements for Filtering Facepiece Respirators, <http://blogs.cdc.gov/niosh-science-blog/2016/01/05/fit-testing/>

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Center for Disease Control and Prevention  
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health





# ADA Reasonable Accommodations in the Workplace

## What Are Reasonable Accommodations?

Reasonable accommodations are changes to the work environment or the way things are usually done that allow a qualified individual with a disability to perform essential job functions. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), employers with 15 or more employees are required to provide reasonable accommodations unless doing so would cause undue hardship.

## Examples of Reasonable Accommodations

**Physical Modifications:** Making existing facilities accessible, such as installing ramps or modifying restrooms to accommodate wheelchair users.

**Flexible Work Schedules:** Allowing flexible hours or part-time schedules to accommodate medical appointments or manage symptoms.

**Assistive Technology:** Providing equipment like screen readers, speech recognition software, or adapted keyboards to assist employees with disabilities.

**Job Restructuring:** Redistributing or reallocating marginal job functions that an employee with a disability cannot perform.

**Service Animals:** Permitting the presence of service animals in the workplace to assist employees with disabilities.

## The Process for Requesting Accommodations

**Request:** Employees should communicate their need for an accommodation to their employer, ideally in writing.

**Interactive Process:** Employers and employees should engage in a dialogue to determine the appropriate accommodation that meets the employee's needs while considering the employer's capabilities.

**Documentation:** Employers may request medical documentation to confirm the need for an accommodation if the disability is not obvious.

## Importance of Accommodations

Accommodations are not considered special treatment; rather, they are essential for leveling the playing field for employees with disabilities. They can also benefit all employees by creating a more inclusive and supportive work environment.

By understanding and implementing reasonable accommodations, employers can foster a workplace culture that values diversity and supports the needs of all employees. For more detailed information, you can refer to resources from the ADA National Network and the U.S. Department of Labor.

If you would like a consultation or support for the evaluation and implementation of appropriate employee accommodations please reach out to a member of our team.

## Did You Know???

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), U.S. legislation that provided civil rights protections to individuals with physical and mental disabilities and guaranteed them equal opportunity in public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications. The act, which defined disability as a "physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities," was signed into law by Pres. George H.W. Bush on July 26, 1990, with widespread bipartisan support.



## PULMONARY FUNCTION TESTING IN THE WORKPLACE



All workers who are exposed to dusts, metal fumes, chemical vapors, and gases which affect the lungs should be given regularly scheduled lung function tests. This simple exam is a valuable tool for detecting and preventing serious occupational lung disease. Workers exposed to certain health hazards, such as cotton, dust, or asbestos, must be given periodic PFTs.

Employers are required to protect workers from overexposure to hazardous substances. If overexposures cannot be prevented by engineering or other controls, then personal protective equipment, such as a respirator, is required. In these cases, employers should develop and follow a respiratory protection plan which includes medical evaluation, fit testing, maintenance, and training.

For more information or to see how we can help manage your pulmonary function needs, please contact us.

### Innovative Work Health

Phone: 302-291-1255

Fax: 443-327-5282

E-mail: [employeehealth@innovativehcc.com](mailto:employeehealth@innovativehcc.com)



## Contact Us

If you are interested in learning more about Innovative Work Health and the services we provide, please reach out to our team today.

---

We offer comprehensive complimentary employer risk and safety program assessment. Please contact an Innovative Work Health Solutions representative for your complimentary consultation.

---

[innovativeworkhealth.com](http://innovativeworkhealth.com)