Surgical masks, dust masks, and N-95 respirators each serve a different purpose in airborne contaminant protection. The following information summarizes common features and uses of each.

**Surgical Face Mask**

- Provides a barrier to capture respiratory droplets from wearer, helping prevent spread of disease.
- Loose-fitting.
- Does not provide the wearer with a reliable level of protection from inhaling smaller airborne particles and is not considered a means of respiratory protection.
- Not NIOSH approved.

**Dust Face Mask**

- Designed to protect wearer against non-toxic irritants such as pollen, mold, grass, etc.
- Similar to the surgical face mask, provides a barrier to capture respiratory droplets from wearer, helping prevent spread of disease.
- Not NIOSH approved.

**N95 Respirator**

- Reduces wearer exposure to particles including small particle aerosols and large droplets. Filters out at least 95% of airborne particles.
- Tight-fitting.
- Only effective when fit-tested using OSHA approved methods.
- NIOSH approved, double strapped, and clearly labeled with “N95.”