Guidance on facial hair:

Short mustaches, sideburns, and small goatees that are neatly trimmed so that no hair compromises the seal of the respirator usually do not present a hazard and, therefore, do not violate paragraph 1910.134(g)(1)(i).

In general, however, beards present serious problems for tight-fitting facepiece respirators because their texture and density vary daily, causing unreliable respirator fit and, therefore, present a higher potential for leakage. However, some other types of respirators do not require a face seal, and thus, usually can be worn with facial hair, such as loose fitting powered air-purifying respirators and hooded powered air-purifying respirators.

Who Can Perform Medical Evaluation:

The employer must select a physician or other licensed healthcare professional, such as a registered nurse or physician's assistant, to perform the medical evaluation. However, if you are the program administrator of the RPP and the only licensed/qualified individual, you will not be able to do so due to HIPAA.

The employer has the evaluation performed by a company physician/nurse or through an arrangement with a local health care facility (Workwell, Concentra, etc.). The employer may also choose to use the employee's own physician to evaluate the employee's ability to wear a respirator, in which case, both the physician's fees and the employee's time must be paid by the employer.

Medical Evaluation/Clearance:

The physician or licensed healthcare professional needs this information to properly evaluate your ability to use the respirator.

In many cases, the physician or licensed healthcare professional may make a medical determination on whether you are or are not able to safely wear a respirator, based just on your answers to the questionnaire. But, sometimes the physician or licensed healthcare professional may decide that a follow-up medical examination is necessary to make a final determination. This could include medical tests, consultations, or diagnostic procedures. If you need a follow-up medical examination, your employer is responsible for paying for it and any associated tests. Your employer must also ensure that the follow-up examination and any other medical testing are provided during your normal working hours, or at a time and place that's convenient for you. In addition, your employer must provide you with an opportunity to discuss the questionnaire and examination results with the physician or licensed healthcare professional.

After reviewing the questionnaire or conducting an initial medical examination, or conducting a follow-up medical examination, the physician or licensed healthcare professional will provide you and your employer with a written recommendation. This document must state three things:

* First, whether you are medically able to wear the respirator and if you have any medical limitations for using the respirator;
* Second, the need, if any, for you to have follow-up medical evaluations;
* And, third, a statement that the doctor or licensed healthcare professional has provided you with a copy of their written recommendation.

This written recommendation *cannot* include any confidential medical information about you.

Even after you have been medically cleared to use a respirator on the job there will be times when you will have to be reevaluated by a physician or licensed healthcare professional. You must be reevaluated when:

* you report medical signs or symptoms that are related to your ability to use a respirator, such as a heart condition, lung disease, or claustrophobia;
* A physician or licensed healthcare professional, your supervisor, or the respirator program administrator informs your employer that you need to be reevaluated;
* Information from the respiratory protection program, including observations made during fit testing and program evaluation, indicates a need for you to be reevaluated; or
* A change occurs in workplace conditions that increases the burden on you while using the respirator; for example your job becomes more physically demanding, or you must wear additional protective clothing, or you must work in extreme temperatures.