



Facemasks and Face Coverings

The COVID-19 outbreak presents unusual circumstances that require us to do whatever is necessary to further our mission. This fact sheet discusses simple things that you can do to keep yourself and others healthy and stop the spread of this virus. Treat everyone as though they are a COVID-19 carrier and every common surface as if it harbors the virus. Remember, one careless person can spread the virus to the whole work unit. It is our responsibility to keep our community and colleagues safe.

“My mask protects you, your mask protects me.”

On April 3, Governor Wolf recommended that all Pennsylvanians wear a mask if they leave their homes. When used correctly, masks, along with other preventative measures such as hand washing and social distancing, reduce the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus.

On April 19th, the Pennsylvania Department of Health ordered that employers are to “make it a mandatory requirement [for employees] to wear masks while on the work site.....in accordance with the guidance from the Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control.”

Face Coverings, Face Shields, and Facemasks limit the spread of infectious droplets in the air by containing coughs and sneezes. Wearing a dust, cloth or homemade mask will help us cut down on the possibility that we might be infecting an innocent bystander or coworker. **Remember:** *The outward-facing side of a mask could be contaminated by others, while the side facing your mouth could be contaminated by you!*

Face Covering, Face Shields, and/or Facemasks are to be worn when:

- Reporting to your work site
- When working near or around the public (i.e. safety or fire patrols) while practicing social distance
- When it is necessary to work with others*. Some tasks, such as operating a chainsaw or being on a fire line in active suppression, require employees to work in tandem or more to alleviate the risk of and response to personal injury in performing the task.
- Talk to your supervisor if a mask, covering, or shield will significantly impair your vision, compromise job safety, or compromise your physical or mental well-being.

**When alone, an employee may operate a vehicle or work in a personal office space without wearing a mask, covering, or shield.*

You CAN reuse a homemade face covering or paper mask:

- Cloth masks should be washed after each use, but should not be worn if damp or wet from saliva or mucus
- Paper masks should be placed in a paper bag after each shift. The bag should be stapled shut and labeled with name, date used, approximate hours in use. Masks should be stored in a secure location.

Best Practices for Face Coverings such as Homemade or Paper Masks

- Consider buying materials online to avoid exposure in public places.
- Purchase masks made by small businesses, saving medical masks for health care workers.
- Avoid touching the mask while using it, and handle masks with washed or sanitized hands.
- Masks should fit snugly around the mouth and nose by adjusting its metal wire around the bridge of the nose.
- Homemade masks can be made from two layers of tightly woven 100% cotton fabric.
- Discard or wash after every use.
- Do not wear when damp or when wet from spit or mucus.

Surgical, N95, and KN95 Masks: These are designed to protect those working in high risk situations who have a likelihood of exposure. This might include health care providers, emergency responders, rangers or others who are in direct contact with the public and cannot practice social distancing.

Surgical Mask must be worn by staff such as rangers or other emergency responders, who are in a situation in which social distancing is not possible. For additional information contact your supervisor.

Surgical Masks should not be reused, but they can be if the supply is exhausted. Ideally, they should be discarded after each day. If supply is exhausted, masks should be placed in a paper bag at the end of each shift. The bag should be stapled shut and labeled with name, date, approximate hours in use. Masks should be stored in a secure location.

KN95 masks are a suitable alternative when N95 masks are not available. The FDA issued an emergency use authorization for KN95 masks, which are produced and regulated in China. KN95 masks have slight differences in their specifications (compared to N95 masks), but are almost identical in performance.

N95 or KN95 Mask must be worn when:

- Staff will be engaging with the public directly and cannot practice social distancing
- In an emergency medical or law enforcement situation where there is reason to believe an individual is ill
- There is the risk of coming into contact with an individual's bodily fluids.
- Contact your supervisor for additional information on when to wear an N95 or KN95 mask
- *Note:* N95 or KN95 masks work best without facial hair and should be fit tested to ensure proper fit

N95 or KN95 masks should be thrown away if they are damaged, soiled or not functioning properly

N95 / KN95 Masks should not be reused, but they can be. Ideally, they should be discarded after close encounters with the public, but they will not be thrown away due to limited supplies.

- Masks should be placed in a paper bag at the end of each shift.
- Bag containing masks should be stapled shut and labeled with name, date, approximate hours in use.
- Masks should be stored in a secure location.
- If the supply of masks is exhausted, you should begin to re-use the masks, starting with those that offer the greatest period of time between the last use.

When Putting on a Mask:

1. Pick up your mask with washed/sanitized hands, then inspect it for damage.
2. Determine the mask's top side (it has a bendable edge for your nose) and the side that faces your mouth (usually the white/non-colored side).
3. Bring the top part of the mask to your nose level
4. Fasten both ear loops, or the top tie/band on the mask
5. Mold or pinch the stiff edge to the shape of your nose
6. Fasten the bottom tie/band, then pull the bottom of the mask over your mouth

When Removing a Mask:

1. Wash/sanitized your hands before removing your mask
2. Pull off both ear loops at once, or remove the top tie/band before the bottom one
3. Move the mask away from you to remove, then wash/sanitize your hands

Please follow all the information provided to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. We will continue to do everything we can to keep our employees informed and safe. For additional information and to stay informed reference the Centers for Disease Control or the Pennsylvania Department of Health websites.

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