

Respirators/Facemasks: Required, Recommended and Voluntary Uses

What is the Coronavirus?

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory disease caused by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)-CoV-2 virus. The current mutation is a new strain of the SARS virus and no individual has any immunity prior to an exposure. The CDC has reported that testing has begun on a vaccine but for now, everyone should prepare and plan for possible impacts resulting from COVID-19. It has spread from China to many other countries around the world, including the United States.

General

Employers are required, where a hazard exists, to have written respirator programs that complies with OSHA Regulations and is meant to protect workers from recognized hazards associated with exposures and oxygen deficient atmospheres. These programs require proper risk assessments to be completed to determine appropriate personal protective equipment, (PPE), that is needed for employee protection. While other entities or municipalities may impose stricter guidelines and guidance in evolving situations, it is important to remember what is required, what is recommended or when voluntary use of respirator and PPE use by individuals.

Required PPE and Masks

In required situations where exposure is expected or deemed a job hazard, all necessary PPE would be needed and that would include face shield, gloves, protective garments in addition to N-95 or better approved respirators for protection. These are meant to prevent the worker from becoming infected in exposure situations. The CDC, OSHA and World Health Organizations, (WHO), still require that healthcare workers and others with direct exposure wear approved N-95 style respirators and other required PPE since they are designed to prevent an individual from becoming infected from others.

CDC Recommended Face Coverings

At this time and as of April 3rd, 2020, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, (CDC), has recommended that person(s) going out in public wear face coverings to assist in deterring the spread of COVID-19. Many individuals could be “pre-symptomatic” or “asymptomatic” not realizing they could spread the virus in close proximity to others. Recent information has indicated that people may be infected and show no signs or symptoms and inadvertently spreading Coronavirus. Those showing no symptoms believe they could not and would not spread the disease to others.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>

Face Covering/Mask Requirements by Local Governing Body or Voluntary

Many jurisdictions around the country are implementing local and state requirements to wear face coverings/masks in public, and therefore requires an employer to review the use of facemasks, respirators and what are their requirements to protect employees. Since Respirators are designed to prevent an individual from becoming infected, wearing them to contain an individual's own condition may fall into the OSHA category of voluntary use. If that is the case, the employer must document with employee that they chose to wear this for personal reasons and not for direct exposures that are expected in the workplace.

Fit Testing Requirements

Face coverings and surgical masks do not require fit testing, either qualitative or quantitative, as a direct exposure respirator would. The use of these face coverings is simply intended to expand the social distancing and spatial separation recommendations from governmental agencies and work to prevent any incidental spread. Face Coverings are not Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) preventing exposure from others and therefore should not be used as such.

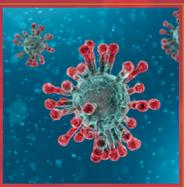


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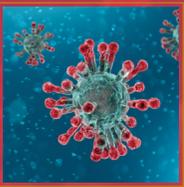
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Coronavirus COVID-19 Respiratory Guidance			
Required Uses	Recommended Uses	Voluntary Uses	CDC/WHO Directives
<p>For exposures that are Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health, (IDLH)</p> <p>For Oxygen deficient atmospheres</p> <p>When exposure levels are above the Personal Exposure Limit, (PEL)</p> <p>When exposure exceeds the Time Weighted Average, (TWA) and/or the 15-Minute Short-Term Exposure Limit, (STEL)</p> <p>For protection against Gases and Vapors</p> <p>For healthcare workers where infectious exposures are present</p>	<p>Where exposures could be present that are IDLH</p> <p>In dusty environments</p> <p>Possible infectious exposures in healthcare settings</p> <p>Where conditions could change to an oxygen deficient atmosphere</p>	<p>When an employee requests and it does not create any additional hazards</p> <p>Follow all use, care, maintenance and storage requirements</p> <p>Understand limitation of different types of respirators</p>	<p>DO</p> <p>Wear in public or community locations</p> <p>Completely cover your mouth and nose</p> <p>Follow manufacturer's directions and instructions</p> <p>Maintain proper adjustment and keep face covering clean</p> <p>Keep control of your mask/covering</p> <p>Stay away from rotating machinery that could entangle</p> <p>Replace when soiled or damaged</p> <p>DON'T</p> <p>Allow covering to obstruct vision</p> <p>Wear it if you have any breathing difficulties</p> <p>Wear it around the neck or let it hang down</p> <p>Lay it down on any surface that could cause contamination</p> <p>Take it home, dispose of if soiled on the job</p> <p>Use it if it is damaged or soiled</p>

Important things to remember:

- Individuals should wear face covering when they are in a public or community setting.
- Infants younger than 2 and individuals with known breathing difficulties should refrain from using face coverings or respirators and follow recommendation from licensed healthcare professionals. It is also recommended to stay inside and away from others.
- Social Distancing and 6' spatial separation should continue as the norm until new guidelines are released by the CDC and Government.



- N-95 Respirators shall be used by healthcare workers, medical first responders and other with direct exposure possibilities. Follow all respirator program requirements.
- Remember, if you feel sick or show symptoms, self-quarantine and seek medical assistance. A medical professional will decide on testing protocols based on your symptoms.
- If difficulty in breathing develops, seek medical help immediately.

For further information on Respiratory Protection Standard and Written Respirator Programs, see: <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/3384small-entity-for-respiratory-protection-standard-rev.pdf>

For NECA Respirator Program Template, please visit the NECA Coronavirus Resource Page at: <https://www.necanet.org/industry-priorities/safety-regulations/neca-coronavirus-resource-center>