



COVID-19 Safe Workplace Guidance

Mask FAQ

Q: Why is it important that we wear masks all the time even when we are alone and not near anyone else?

A: There is a potential that any one of us could be infected with COVID-19 but not have symptoms. Research shows that COVID-19 is spread through droplets and the main purpose of the mask is to prevent droplets from becoming airborne. By wearing a mask, you are demonstrating 200% accountability for the health of people around you.

Q: Do I really have to wear a mask all the time? Are there any exceptions? What if I am talking on my cell phone or over the radio - I am not sure people can hear me.

A: For everyone's protection, everyone should wear facemasks. However, during some general activities, a facemask may not be feasible. Please see the table below.

You are not required to wear a facemask when:	
Eating or drinking	Practice social distancing and clean the area once you have completed the activity (areas for eating, drinking & smoking shall be designed to promote separation of individuals by 6' or more)
Smoking in designated areas	
Performing a task that requires protection greater than a facemask	
If you have a medical condition that does not allow you to wear a mask	Provide medical certification
Performing designated work activities alone and outdoors with no public or employee interaction or sharing of materials and / or equipment	Employees should still have a mask on their person should circumstances change abruptly
Driving a company vehicle if you are the only person that drives that vehicle	If the vehicle is shared between employees, masks should be required, and the vehicles commonly touched surfaces should be wiped down before and after each use.

Q: Do I really have to wear a mask if I'm performing a task that requires high physical exertion?

A: All employees should wear facemasks. However, where the use of a facemask hinders employee work activity, violates other work procedures, creates a greater hazard, or interferes with the proper use of task-specific PPE, the employee may not have to wear a facemask.

Q: What data shows the effectiveness of surgical masks?

A: Cambridge University completed a study comparing filtration efficiency among different materials when exposed to a virus. Surgical masks were found to have a 90% filtration efficiency and were 3 times more effective in blocking transmission than homemade masks. The study can be [found here](#). Wearing a surgical mask aligns with the latest guidance from the medical community, the CDC and the State of

Michigan. It is true that the guidance has changed as the scientists and medical professionals continue to study this virus, but our interactions with infectious disease experts aligns with this recommendation. Even more, wearing a surgical mask is just one of the many protections you can take to help stop and slow the spread of the virus.

Remember to:

- Stay at least six feet away from everyone whenever possible.
- Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.
- Don't touch your face.
- If you feel sick, stay home from work and seek medical guidance.
- Boost your own immune system by eating healthfully, hydrating, exercising and getting plenty of rest.

Q: If I have already had COVID why would I need to wear a mask or follow other new procedures?

A: We are still learning about this virus from research conducted by agencies and medical research organizations. Currently, there is no evidence that having this virus will prevent you from getting it again. Therefore, every employee should be required to wear a mask for their protection and the protection of everyone around them.

Q: How should I store a procedural mask?

A: Masks designated for reuse should be stored in paper bags that are clean and breathable to reduce the potential for microbial growth. Bags may be used for an extended period provided that they are not soiled or compromised.

Q: When we must work within 6' of other people, what should we do?

A: Some situations may be unique. If you cannot maintain social distancing due to a work task, wear appropriate respiratory protection and wash your hands regularly during breaks.

Q: Will wearing a mask cause me to become ill? I'm worried about breathing in moisture from the mask.

A: The mask will help protect you from becoming ill as it will not allow respiratory droplets to enter your nose or mouth. However, if the mask becomes damp or dirty, we recommend you replace it immediately or find the most suitable respiratory protection for the job if you're working in an extreme environment and these conditions cannot be controlled.

Q: Is an N95 Mask with an exhalation valve more effective than an N95 Mask without one?

A: The CDC has indicated that a N95 respirator with an exhalation valve does provide the same level of protection to the wearer as one that does not have a valve. The presence of an exhalation valve reduces exhalation resistance, which makes it easier to breathe (exhale). CDC research indicates that a respirator with an exhalation valve keeps the face cooler and reduces moisture build up inside the facepiece.