

Overview

As COVID-19 coronavirus spreads in Philadelphia, an increasing proportion of people who are encountered are likely to be infected. The City has enacted a **“Stay at Home” order** and **recommendations on social distancing** to reduce the number of person-to-person interactions that could lead to spread of the infection. Personal protective equipment should not be seen as an alternative to following these recommendations. However, some workers may need to come in close contact with others, and it is possible that simple interactions such as talking may put others at some risk. Use of barrier protections to shield the nose and mouth during these face-to-face interactions may reduce this risk. In addition, use of a face mask helps prevent transmission of the virus from the user to others nearby.

The most effective personal protective equipment to prevent acquisition of COVID-19 are medical-grade devices that cover the eyes, nose and mouth, such as clear plastic face shields, N95 face masks, and surgical face masks. Medical-grade face shields, N95 respirators, and surgical face masks are in limited supply and should be reserved for use by healthcare workers, who have the greatest risk of infection. Other workers may use simple cloth face masks and alternative face shields that are less effective but nevertheless provide some protection when contact with others is unavoidable. For additional guidance on respiratory protection, please **access the recommendations on phila.gov/COVID**.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends “wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies) especially in areas of significant community-based transmission.” This guidance is for workers in Philadelphia, where there is significant community-based transmission, and it aligns with the CDC recommendations.

Guidance for City employees

City departments must consider what type of respiratory protection is most suitable for their employees based upon **these guidelines**. Law enforcement, Fire and EMS personnel and healthcare workers should refer to their department’s protocols and distribution methods for obtaining respiratory protection. Departmental safety officers and human resources managers can provide guidance as for the selection acquisition and use of respiratory protection

For all other employees serving in the following roles - public-facing community outreach, food distribution, homeless outreach, warehouse stocking/packing, maintenance and repair, shelter workers, security, and others who work with the public – the following guidelines apply:

- Departments, through their HR Manager or Safety Officer, should identify which employees in their departments are working in these specific roles.
- **Due to limited supplies, employees in these categories are encouraged to utilize their own cloth masks while on duty.** Additionally, if a department has their own supply of respiratory protection that can be provided to their employees, they are asked to make those available to them.

Guidance for City employees [continued]

- Should an employee not have access to their own cloth mask or the department does not have the available supplies, one cloth mask per employee will be provided to them through the Emergency Operations Center.
- To request a cloth mask for your employees, the department HR Manager or Safety Officer is required to place a request with eoc.logistics@phila.gov. The request must include the number of employees requiring a cloth mask and the drop-off location for the masks.
- Employees may decorate the cloth mask with fabric safe markers to help ensure the mask is identifiable to the specific employee. Decoration should be tasteful and not penetrate the mask (eg: safety pins, etc.)

How to use a cloth mask

How to apply the face mask:

1. Clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
2. Remove the mask from the paper bag.
3. Place the mask over your nose and mouth.
4. Tie the straps, behind your head to the mask fits securely – the mask should fit well around the mouth and nose without any gaps at the sides.
5. Avoid touching the front of the mask once it is in place.

How to remove the face mask:

1. Clean your hands.
2. Avoid touching the front of the mask.
3. Untie the bottom strap.
4. Untie the top strap and remove away from your face.
5. Place back into the paper bag.
6. Clean your hands.
7. Put your cloth mask in the laundry whenever it is wet or soiled and at the end of each day.
8. Fabric face masks can be washed with ordinary detergent and do not have to be separated from other laundry.