

Employer's Guide to Homemade Masks in the Workplace

Tight fitting ½ or full-face respirators, and filtering face pieces (certified by NIOSH) are designed and proven to filter out specific levels and types of airborne contaminants. Respirator fit testing ensures a good fit and prevents unfiltered air from being inhaled by the wearer. NIOSH-certified respirators protect workers from air contaminants identified in the workplace.

Homemade masks don't meet these requirements. However, the CDC has made recommendations for wearing cloth masks to help stop the spread of the Novel Coronavirus. CDC recommends wearing homemade cloth face coverings under the following circumstances:

- 1) 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.
- 2) People who may have the virus and do not know it.

Regardless of the above, if workers are wearing homemade masks for the purpose of reducing transmission of disease or germs, they should be secondary to your business efforts to control the hazard through other means. Homemade masks are not respirators and social/physical distancing is still the primary control method.

- 1) Evaluate the current social distancing, hygiene, and cleaning practices at your place of business.
 - a. Do they meet or exceed the current recommendations by the CDC?
 - b. Have all staff been trained in the work practices?
 - c. Are you able to prove that your work practices are being followed?
- 2) Provide ongoing information and training for your workers on social distancing and disinfection requirements.
- 3) Homemade masks may be allowed if:
 - a. The mask is routinely machine washed, at least before the start of every shift.
 - b. The mask can be removed with the wearer not touching their eyes, nose, and mouth.
 - c. The mask is stored in a clean container for isolation.
 - d. The wearer can and does immediately wash hands before and after each use.

As recommended by the CDC, N95 respirators and surgical masks should be reserved for healthcare professionals. For more information on the CDC's recommendations on homemade masks use the following link.

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