

FACE MASKS

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has recently revised its recommendations regarding wearing face masks by the general public. The CDC is recommending that everyone wear a face mask as an additional, voluntary health measure when in public. Additionally, some building owners and job sites are requiring the use of a face mask.

CDC’s recommendation is for standard disposable face masks or even homemade masks. The primary purpose of wearing a mask is to prevent respiratory droplets produced from a person’s cough, sneeze, or talking from being expelled into the air and infecting others.

Remember, face masks are just a part of protecting yourself. The main factor to prevent exposure is to wash hands frequently with soap and water, don’t touch your face with your hands, and personal distancing.

Second important reminder is: **HOMEMADE CLOTH FACE MASKS DO NOT REPLACE RESPIRATORS.** Face masks do not protect you from ordinary hazards like silica, where an N-95 respirator would be required.

As a quick reminder, Cloth Face Coverings (aka Face Masks) should –

- Fit snugly, but comfortably against the side of the face.
- Be secured with ties or ear loops
- Include multiple layers of fabric
- Allow for breathing without restriction
- Be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape.
 - Some home-made cloth face masks, after laundering, may need a light iron to retain shape. DO NOT use any starch or fabric stiffener on the masks as these chemicals might irritate your respiratory tract.

When wearing a face covering on the jobsite, there may be some added hazards associated with it. For instance, your safety glasses may fog more readily. If this happens, make sure that you have a proper fit around the nose to prevent excessive moisture from getting up into the glasses. The mask may also reduce your visibility, so be aware of your surroundings and those working around you.

If performing hotwork, or grinding materials, extra precaution is necessary to prevent your mask from getting burned, slag striking it, or general damage from sparks as these have an added risk for injury. Protect your face and face mask with the use of a full-face shield or full-face welding hood as appropriate.

If you need to take your mask off, make sure that you wash your hands before touching the mask and gently remove it only by the ear straps. For storing it, have a designated paper bag with you that you can place it in when not using it. If you are in public daily, and will be wearing the mask for hours, change your paper bag frequently. When place the mask inside the bag, you should mark the sides of the bag “Inside” and “Outside” and always place the mask in the bag with the corresponding side of the mask facing the corresponding side of the bag, to prevent contaminating the inside of your mask.

FACE COVERING PRECAUTIONS:

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure you can breathe through the mask • Make sure it covers your nose and mouth • WASH it frequently after use • Remove your mask with the ear loops and not the front of the mask. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use surgical masks or other PPE intended for healthcare workers • Leave your face covering laying around where it can be contaminated. • Touch the outside of the mask without washing your hands. • Adjust the mask after it is in place and fit properly.

