



Background

As our Nation continues to learn more about the novel Coronavirus, COVID-19, and rates of infection begin to slow, governmental agencies are developing proactive approaches to begin safely reopening workplaces. Many reopening frameworks, including the President's, use tiered or phased approaches.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), it is now known that a significant portion of individuals with coronavirus lack symptoms (asymptomatic) and that even those who eventually develop symptoms (pre-symptomatic) can transmit the virus to others before showing symptoms. Based on this new information, the CDC has found it critical to emphasize the importance of maintaining 6-foot physical distance, and is advising the use of cloth facial coverings to help prevent people who may unknowingly have the virus from transmitting it to others.

Federal employers are required to comply with OSHA regulations, including the Act's [General Duty Clause](#), Section 5(a)(1), which requires employers to provide their employees with a workplace free from recognized hazards likely to cause death or serious physical harm. This mandate is applied at the individual-level, not the collective workforce level.

More information can be found at:

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

Definitions

A cloth face covering is a material that covers the nose and mouth. It can be secured to the head with ties or straps or simply wrapped around the lower face. It can be made of a variety of materials, such as cotton, silk, or linen. A cloth face covering may be factory-made or sewn by hand or can be improvised from household item.

Guidance for wearing a cloth face covering

When physical distancing (six feet apart) cannot be maintained (e.g., vehicle cab, conference room, front office, etc.), the best available information indicates cloth facial coverings are effective PPE, particularly when used by those who are infectious.

All employees, public, partners, and stakeholders are required to wear face coverings that cover the nose and mouth whenever one of the following conditions are met:

- When there is a possibility of close contact interaction between persons (less than six foot distance)
- When in at a business or organization regardless of distance between persons, or
- When the recirculated air flow in the room is poor or inadequate at filtering out airborne viruses

Face coverings are not required for individuals when wearing it would inhibit that individual's health.

Note: When in public, employees should have a face covering easily accessible and be prepared to properly use it when in contact with others.



Guidance for fitting cloth face covering

Cloth face coverings 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
- Individuals should be careful not to touch their eyes, nose, and mouth when removing their face covering and wash hands immediately after removing face covering

Care for Cloth Face Covering

The CDC has general guidelines on how to properly clean most cloth and fabric masks:

- Fabric face masks should be routinely washed depending on the frequency of use
- A washing machine should suffice in properly washing a face covering
- Individuals should be careful not to touch their eyes, nose, and mouth when removing their face covering and wash hands immediately after removing

If hand washing is your option, lathering the masks with soap and scrubbing them for at least 20 seconds with warm to hot water. Washing should be followed by hot air drying, Dry your mask on the highest possible heat the fabric will allow or iron masks on the cotton or linen setting to kill any remaining virus.