



CITY OF SPOKANE COVID-19 FACE MASK GUIDANCE

Source: WA Department of Labor & Industries <https://lni.wa.gov/agency/outreach/novel-coronavirus-outbreak-covid-19-resources>

WHEN SHOULD A CLOTH MASK BE WORN?

Washington employees are required to wear a cloth mask at work in almost all situations. Cloth masks must be worn at all times except when working alone. Someone is considered to be working alone when they're isolated from interaction with other people and have little or no expectation of in-person interruption.

Working alone includes:

- A lone employee inside the enclosed cab of a crane or other heavy equipment or vehicle
- A person by themselves inside an office with 4 walls and a door
- An employee by themselves outside in a field or other open area with no anticipated contact with others
- A lone worker inside of a cubicle with 4 walls (one with an opening for an entryway) that are high enough to block the breathing zone of anyone walking by, and whose work activity will not require anyone to come inside of the cubicle.

Face covering is required when:

- Leaving your cubicle or office
- Around other employees – while maintaining 6 feet or more social distancing
- Anytime in group gatherings
- Riding in the same vehicle
- Walking near or close to other people

It is recommended to always carry a face covering or mask when working alone, so it can be quickly donned when someone enters the work area.

Contact the Safety Team with questions or to request a risk assessment to determine if a face covering is required.

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See Reverse for Frequently Asked Questions

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

DO WORKERS HAVE TO WEAR CLOTH FACE COVERINGS WHEN INTERACTING WITH CLIENTS WHILE THEY'RE BEHIND A PLEXIGLAS BARRIER AND ARE SAFE-DISTANCED?

Yes. While the use of barriers is encouraged, it does not remove the requirement that workers have to wear a face covering or mask. The requirement for workers to wear face coverings or better is based on whether they're working alone.

DO FIRE, POLICE, 911 DISPATCHERS, AND THE LIKE NEED TO WEAR A CLOTH FACE COVERING WHILE WORKING AT THE DESK DURING EMERGENCY CALLS?

Barriers and ventilation should be set up in the call center to provide effective separation between workstations and supervisor locations. Dispatchers do not need to wear masks while sitting in separated workstations or communicating on emergency calls.

Coverings/masks must be used when with other people, in accordance to the [L&I guidance chart](#).

WHAT ABOUT POLICE? SHOULD THEY WEAR (OR NOT WEAR) CLOTH FACE COVERINGS IN A CAR ALONE, ON THE BEAT, AND OTHER SITUATIONS?

As a general rule, cloth face coverings should be worn when not working alone. When interacting with the public, masks should be worn, but other public safety concerns may necessitate removing the mask for improved communication or to avoid the mask being a hazard. An individual alone in a car is permitted to not wear a facial covering. Two officers in a car is likely medium risk and a covering must be worn; other situations may need to be evaluated. Masks or face coverings are required when law enforcement officers are in a station house or other administrative building with frequent in-person interactions.

DO FIREFIGHTERS HAVE TO WEAR MASKS WHILE SLEEPING AT THE STATION?

No. Beds need to be 6 feet from each other, and if only bunk beds are used, the bottom bunk should be occupied.

CAN WEARING A MASK WHILE I AM WORKING AND IT IS HOT OUT CAUSE ME TO OVERHEAT?

No, a face covering alone will not cause a person to overheat. Studies have shown that filtering face pieces such as an N95 respirator do not cause additional physiological stress to most wearers and do not contribute to heat stress. Cloth face coverings and procedural masks are typically not as restrictive as wearing an N95 mask, and so are of even less concern regarding overheating of the wearer.

WHEN CAN A FACE SHIELD SUBSTITUTE FOR COVERINGS/MASKS FOR OUTSIDE HEAT-EXPOSED WORKERS?

While working alone.

CAN WORKERS LOWER THEIR MASK BELOW THE CHIN OCCASIONALLY THROUGHOUT THE DAY WHILE WORKING, AND WHAT STEPS SHOULD WORKERS TAKE TO STAY SAFE?

Yes, while working alone and during cool-down breaks, as long as appropriate distance from other people is maintained.

AT WHAT TEMPERATURE ABOVE 80 DEGREES IS IT APPROPRIATE TO REMOVE FACIAL COVERINGS AND MASKS WHEN EXPOSED TO THE HAZARD OF HEAT STRESS?

It is not appropriate to remove facial coverings based on the temperature. Removing facial coverings is not an effective way of reducing body temperature. Regular protective measures to control heat stress must be implemented, such as drinking plenty of water, frequent breaks in a cool area, and scheduling work during cooler parts of the day.

DISPOSABLE MEDICAL MASKS SEEM TO BE BETTER TOLERATED FOR OUTSIDE WORKERS IN HEAT. ARE THESE BETTER THAN CLOTH MASKS DURING HEAT?

Cloth face coverings are the minimum that is required for low-transmission-risk work. If the worker prefers to use disposable medical masks, that is acceptable.

WHAT COVID-19 PROTECTIONS ARE REQUIRED FOR A SPEAKER AT A NEWS CONFERENCE, AND WITNESSES IN COURT TRIALS?

Reporters, on-camera anchors/talent, speakers on camera, and witnesses at court trials may remove their cloth face covering or mask for the time they are speaking only. A shared podium, witness stand, or equipment should not be touched without being sanitized after each person has used it. All people involved must maintain at least 6 feet of physical distancing from each other. All other workers, including camera operators, production staff, and courtroom staff, must wear masks or face coverings while not working alone.

CAN CLOTH FACE COVERINGS OR MASKS BE REMOVED DURING LUNCH?

Yes, but social distancing needs to be maintained.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR WORKERS WITH MEDICAL AND DISABILITY ISSUES THAT PREVENT THE USE OF A CLOTH FACE COVERING OR MASK?

Employees with a medical or disability issue, who are requesting accommodation, must provide their employer with an accommodation statement from their medical professional specifying that a face covering or mask should not be worn due to their present health condition. Employers cannot just allow the employee to work without a mask with no other mitigations or accommodations.

Employers should assess any negative impacts that face coverings might have on employees with disabilities and make accommodations per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). For example, workers communicating with people who are deaf or hard of hearing may need to temporarily unmask while staying at least 6 feet away or behind a physical barrier in order to allow for lip reading.

ARE FACE SHIELDS AN ACCEPTABLE SUBSTITUTE FOR MASKS OR CLOTH FACE COVERINGS?

No. Face shields provide good droplet protection for the wearer, but the purpose of using a cloth face covering or mask is to protect others. Because people can be infected and actively transmitting the virus without knowing it, coverings stop the virus at the source — the mouth and nose — from getting into the air. It prevents workers from passing the virus to other workers and customers.

IS A FACE SHIELD WITH CLOTH COVERING THE SIDE AND BOTTOM EDGES AN ACCEPTABLE ACCOMMODATION FOR WORKERS WHO HAVE A MEDICAL EXEMPTION TO WEARING A MASK OR CLOTH FACE COVERING?

Yes. A face shield that includes a cloth extension attached to the entire edge of the shield is an acceptable accommodation.

DOES WEARING A MASK CREATE A BUILD-UP OF CARBON DIOXIDE FOR THE PERSON WEARING IT?

No. That's a myth. You can find more information at the Department of Health (DOH) web page [Myths and Facts about Cloth Face Coverings](#).