

# COVID-19 BEST PRACTICES #7

## EMPLOYERS' RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT EMPLOYEES

Personal protective equipment, commonly referred to as "PPE", is equipment worn to minimize exposure to hazards that cause serious workplace injuries and illnesses. These injuries and illnesses may result from contact with chemical, radiological, physical, electrical, mechanical, or other workplace hazards.

Personal protective equipment may include items such as gloves, safety glasses and shoes, earplugs or muffs, hard hats, respirators, or coveralls, vests and full body suits.

Correctly using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) can help prevent some exposures to COVID-19. However, it should be used in addition to other prevention strategies, such as physical distancing, physical barriers, staggering work schedules, restricting access to specific areas of the worksite, teleworking, or other methods for preventing face-to-face contact with potentially infected individuals.



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Recommendations for PPE are specific to job tasks and may change depending on new information on this disease as it becomes available.

All types of PPE must be:

- **Selected based upon the hazard to the worker.**
- **Properly fitted.**
- **Consistently and properly worn when required.**
- **Regularly inspected, maintained, and replaced, as necessary.**
- **Properly removed, cleaned, and stored or disposed of to avoid contamination of self, others, and the environment.**

Generally speaking, medical grade PPE including N-95 or other respirator types are not needed in most businesses unless your employees have known contact with COVID-19 positive individuals. Please consult with Oregon OSHA if you feel that employees need medical grade PPE.



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When selecting face masks or PPE for your workers, ask yourself these questions:

- **What is the main risk for my employees?**
- **How often will the PPE, if necessary, need to be replaced, or laundered?**
- **Where will reusable face coverings be laundered? At the business? At employees' homes? Is there a linen service that will wash employee face masks?**
- **In terms of cost, does it make sense to provide more durable face coverings that will last longer, or continue to pay for disposable options?**
- **Which will provide the best protection for employees and be most cost effective over time?**
- **Where will the PPE be stored when it is not in use?**

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## FACE MASKS VS. PPE

Note: A face mask (also called a surgical mask, procedure mask, or other similar terms) on a patient or other sick person should not be confused with PPE for a worker; the mask acts to contain potentially infectious respiratory secretions at the source (i.e., the person's nose and mouth).

	FACE MASK	PPE	
Who wears it	General public, foodservice workers	Medical staff	
What	Surgical Mask Procedure Mask	N95 Mask	
Why	Protecting others in case you're infected	Protect medical workers from sick patients	
Example			

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