



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
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April 3, 2020

TO: All DOC Staff

FROM: Stephen Sinclair, Secretary

SUBJECT: Voluntary N95 Respirator General Use

We are constantly reassessing our practices given the ever-changing situation involving COVID-19 locally and across our country. The health and safety of our staff and our justice-involved populations are our priority. Our department plays a critical role in the public health of our state and our practices have the potential to impact and help “flatten the curve.” The State of Washington has managed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within our state’s correctional facilities to date by taking proactive measures. The current forecast for the community is that the number of COVID-19 cases will peak in mid-April. Therefore, following the trend by other agencies and based on expert guidance, we are now recommending staff in a facility or the field who have close contact with the incarcerated population or those on community supervision wear an N95 respirator while at work.

Although maintaining social distance and washing your hands with soap and water are the best protections against COVID-19, wearing a mask or respirator can supplement these protective efforts. This may help protect our staff and our incarcerated population, as well as our local hospitals by reducing the risk of overloading community hospitals with additional COVID-19 cases.

DOC has begun issuing staff in a facility or the field with close contact with the incarcerated population or those on community supervision one N95 from our expired supply to be worn for general use. We will reevaluate the situation on Monday, April 20, 2020. The Centers of Disease Control (CDC) has approved the use of expired N95s. It is the responsibility of each employee to maintain possession of the N95 they are issued in order to use personal protective equipment (PPE) responsibly.

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It is crucial that the N95 is used in accordance with the following criteria:

- N95 respirators should NEVER be shared.
- Since the use of these N95s are for general protection and not for use when going into a designated quarantined or isolated area, medical clearance and fit testing are not required. If you have or develop medical issues with the use of a general use N95, contact your Incident Command Post for guidance through your chain of command.
- The general use N95 should be worn continuously while at work over your nose and chin.
- Once you begin wearing the general use N95, hand hygiene must be done before and after touching your N95. Minimize the applying and removing of your N95 at work.
- The general use N95 is NOT a substitute for wearing proper PPE for protection when in close contact with patients suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19. In these situations, the general use N95 should be removed, if possible, and appropriate PPE should be worn, per protocol. Once outside the area of concern, your general use N95 can be put back on for routine daily activities. Like all other PPE, if the general use N95 is worn when interacting with an isolated, quarantined, or symptomatic patient, it should be removed and disposed of as appropriate.
- When working with asymptomatic patients during activities that require a surgical mask (e.g. active screening, transport, interacting with quarantined, etc.), place a surgical mask over your general use N95 and then remove the surgical mask in a way that maintains the integrity of your general use N95 without contaminating it.
- Your general use N95 should be stored in a clean and dry place (i.e., a brown paper bag, not a plastic bag), while eating or drinking, and when not in use.

Thank you for your continued diligence during these challenging times. We will continue to keep everyone updated. Please take care of yourselves, stay positive, and remember to wash your hands.