APPENDIX C: Masks

Personal Protective Equipment should be broken down into the following 3 categories based on risk of exposure levels:

1. Low Risk: tasks where an individual is isolated.
2. Medium Risk: wear disposable gloves, paper/filter mask.
3. High Risk: tasks where individuals cannot maintain social distancing of 6 feet.

Wearing masks if you are healthy
- Medical masks and N95 respirators should be reserved for healthcare workers.
- Wearing a cloth mask is a matter of personal choice.
- Some people can spread the virus when they have very mild symptoms or may be unaware they are infected. In this case, wearing a mask can help in containing your own droplets and protect others but it will not protect you from COVID-19. Masks may give a person a false sense of security and are likely to increase the number of times a person will touch their own face (e.g., to adjust the mask). Any mask, no matter how efficient at filtration or how good the seal, will have minimal effect if it is not used together with other preventive measures, such as frequent hand washing and physical distancing.
- It is important to treat people wearing masks with respect.

Considering the use of homemade masks
- The use of a homemade mask should only be considered by members of the public who are symptomatic, or caring for someone who is symptomatic, as an interim measure if commercial masks are not available.
- If you are making a mask, here is some information to improve the effectiveness of homemade masks:
- Some materials are better than others. Use clean and stretchy 100% cotton t-shirts or pillowcases.
- Ensure the mask fits tightly around the nose and mouth; material that allows droplets to pass through will not work. *Hint - a twist tie at the top, will insure a snug fit over the bridge of the nose.*
- The mask should be comfortable, or you won't want to wear it consistently.
- If the mask makes it a lot harder to breathe, then the seal will not be as good, and the mask will be less effective.
- Clean or change the mask often.

## Disposing of used (disposable) masks
- Masks need to be changed frequently. To dispose of masks after use:
  - Wash your hands with soap and water before taking off your mask.
  - Dispose of used masks in a wastebasket lined with the plastic bag.
  - After taking off your mask, wash your hands again with soap and water before touching your face or doing anything else.

- When emptying wastebaskets, take care to not touch used masks or tissues with your hands. All waste can go into regular garbage bins.
- Clean your hands with soap and water after emptying the wastebasket.

Help prevent the spread of COVID-19: How to use a mask

1 Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before touching the mask. If you don't have soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
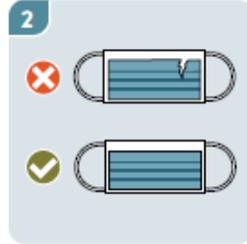
2 Inspect the mask to ensure it's not damaged.

3 Turn the mask so the coloured side is facing outward.

4 Put the mask over your face and if there is a metallic strip, press it to fit the bridge of your nose

5 Put the loops around each of your ears, or tie the top and bottom straps.

6 Make sure your mouth and nose are covered and there are no gaps. Expand the mask by pulling the bottom of it under your chin.

7 Press the metallic strip again so it moulds to the shape of your nose, and wash your hands again.

8 Don't touch the mask while you're wearing it. If you do, wash your hands.

9 Don't wear the mask if it gets wet or dirty. Don't reuse the mask. Follow correct procedure for removing the mask.

Removing the mask

1 Wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

2 Lean forward to remove your mask. Touch only the ear loops or ties, not the front of the mask.

3 Dispose of the mask safely.

4 Wash your hands. If required, follow the procedure for putting on a new mask.

Note: Graphics adapted from BC Centre for Disease Control (BC Ministry of Health), "How to wear a face mask."

worksafebc.com

WORK SAFE BC