

As of December 8, new mandatory public health measures are in effect across Alberta to protect the health system and slow the spread of COVID-19. For the most up to date information, refer to the [Employee Guide](#) or visit the [COVID-19 onecity page](#) for updates.

RESPIRATORS, MASKS & FACE COVERINGS

Q. What is the difference between a face covering, a mask and a respirator?

A face covering is typically a handmade or manufactured mask made of cotton or similar fabrics. They are used to contain and prevent the spread of fluids from the mouth or nose, in the form of respiratory droplets, to others and environmental surfaces.

A mask is a medical-grade or non-medical grade face mask (also known as a surgical or procedure mask) that does not seal tightly to the face and therefore does not act to protect the wearer. They have the same purpose as a face covering, but are subject to testing and design standards to ensure they perform as intended.

A filtering facepiece respirator (N95) protects the wearer by filtering particles from the air the wearer breathes. These respirators are intended to seal tightly to the wearer's face and are subject to rigorous testing standards.

Refer to the [Face Masks Quick Reference Guide](#) for more information.

Q: Are employees required to wear masks or face coverings?

A Public Health Emergency was declared by the Province of Alberta. Part of public health orders requires the use of masks at all times in all indoor public spaces and workplaces, subject only to limited exceptions. The limited exceptions applicable to employees in the City include:

- The person is alone at a workstation and separated by at least 2 metres distance from all others;
- The person is separated from every other person by a physical barrier that prevents droplet transmission;
- The person is consuming food or drink [they must be 2 metres away from others];
- The person is unable to wear a face mask due to a mental or physical health concern or limitation [this must be confirmed with Disability Management]; or
- A hazard assessment determined the person's safety will be at risk if they wear a mask while working.

The mandatory requirement to wear a face mask applies to all employees, visitors, delivery personnel and contractors; and it applies to all locations where workers are present. All persons should expect to wear a mask at all times, except during limited times when an exception applies (above). Complying with masking requirements is the law and it is a workplace requirement.

Why should I/we wear a mask or face covering and when am I/are we required to wear them?

In accordance with the public health order, masks are mandatory in all indoor public spaces and workplaces including the following:

- Masks are now required for in-person meetings and training classrooms, even where physically distanced from others in the room. Online meetings or training should be preferred wherever possible.
- Workers in cubicles, work bays or designated marked spaces may work without a mask while in the cubicle, work bay or space, provided they are at least 2 metres apart from other workers at all times, and provided no other person will enter that cubicle, bay or space at any time.
 - The furthest edges of the cubicle, bay or marked space must be at least 2 metres apart from the edges of another cubicle, bay or space for this exception to apply.
 - Alternatively, if the cubicle, bay or space is separated by high walls or dividers made of solid materials that prevent droplet transmission (e.g. plastic, plexiglass, metal, wood), an exception may apply.
 - If another person enters the space, both persons must wear masks.
- The application of task based exceptions will be determined by supervision in consultation with their Workforce Safety and Employee Health partners. If in doubt, a mask should be worn and a supervisor consulted to ensure appropriate safety measures are established.

This is in addition to any physical distancing practices that should be in place.

How will masks be supplied and distributed?

Masks will be distributed by Supervisors. Supervisors will be required to work with their Corporate Procurement designate to order and maintain an adequate supply of masks ([Critical Supplies Process](#)). Employees are permitted to wear and use personal reusable cloth masks (ie. face coverings). Please review the PPE selection guide in the [Face Mask Quick Reference Guide](#) for minimum mask requirements.

Q. Will wearing a face covering prevent me from getting COVID-19?

Wearing a mask adds another layer of control for the wearer because the mask may reduce the degree to which a person touches their mouth and nose, thereby reducing risk of transmission and can also help reduce the “virus dose” that a person receives when they are infected, which appears to lead to milder symptoms. A mask is mainly intended to help contain the droplets that might be emitted from the wearer during a cough or sneeze. A face covering must always be used in conjunction with proper handwashing and soiled mask handling, disposal or cleaning practices to effectively reduce the risk of getting COVID-19 and other respiratory based viruses.

Q. As a supervisor, what should I say to frontline employees who do not want to wear cloth face coverings?

All employees are required to wear a mask or face covering in all indoor public spaces and workplaces subject to limited exceptions as listed above and/or if a hazard assessment has identified appropriate controls are in place and a face covering is no longer required. These requirements are mandated by the Government of Alberta and compliance with these laws is a workplace requirement.

Q: Will COE employees working on other contractor sites be issued the same masks as the COE employees working on sites that require mandatory face coverings?

The City will issue masks and respirators where a face covering is mandated on a third-party site, or where the hazard assessment requires a mask after all other controls have been considered and addressed.

Q. The nature of my work prevents me from keeping a 2 m/6 feet distance from others at all times. Will I be required and/or issued a respirator/mask?

Masks and face coverings are now required in all workplaces even when physical distancing, with only a few exceptions (see above). As a result of this requirement, the City of Edmonton provides employees with non-medical masks in the same manner they provide other forms of personal protective equipment (PPE). The

City of Edmonton created a [guide](#) to explain more on the types of masks, procedures and controls we have in place at the City.

Q. I have an underlying health condition, will wearing a face covering affect my health?

Some medical conditions could prevent an employee from safely wearing a face covering. Any person with a pre-existing medical or health condition that could impact their ability to wear a face covering is strongly encouraged to consult with a qualified health care professional to ensure wearing the covering does not place their health or immediate safety at risk. If an exemption to the mandate to wear a face covering in a city owned and operated facility or transit vehicle applies to you, then you will be connected with a Disability Management Consultant to initiate the Duty to Accommodate process.

City of Edmonton workers who are required to wear City-issued tight fitting respiratory protective equipment (ie. N95 or higher level respirators), are subjected to an internally administered health screening process to determine clearance for safe respirator use. Additional information on fit testing requirements and health screening during COVID-19 may be found in the [OH&S Guideline for Respiratory Protective Equipment](#).

Q. Do face coverings replace my existing PPE?

Face coverings, masks and respirators should be used in addition to other engineering and administrative hazard controls to protect you and others from COVID-19 and other identified respiratory hazards. If a specific type of respirator is required for a job or task, wear that respirator instead of a cloth face covering as outlined in your hazard assessment or respirator code of practice. The reason for this is that respirators protect against other airborne contaminants and hazards that may be present such as silica or welding fumes that a cloth face covering does not. When that task is completed, a cloth face covering can be otherwise used.

Q. My duties require me to wear an N95 filtering facepiece respirator but I've heard there's a shortage.

In order to ensure services that rely on N95 respirators continue—as well as to ensure that the health and safety of frontline first responders are protected—a number of solutions have been proposed in the [OH&S Guideline for Respiratory Protective Equipment](#) in the event of supply shortages. Depending on your identified respiratory hazards, a suitable alternative to the N95 respirator will be provided to you to allow for the same or a higher amount of respiratory protection against the identified respiratory hazards.

Q. Am I allowed to wear a face covering with political statements or logos on them?

No - while at work, you are a representative of the City of Edmonton; therefore, your face covering cannot promote political statements, logos, or statements/pictures as they may be offensive to others.

Additional Resources:

If you have a question about Face Coverings, Non-medical masks or N95 respirators that is not answered in this FAQ, please contact your business areas Safety Engagement Lead.

The City collaborated with AHS and Dr. Chris Sikora, the Edmonton Zone Medical Officer for Health, to produce an [educational video](#) that provides clarity around wearing masks and gloves.

To learn more, watch this [Face Covering and Mask video](#) for additional information explaining more on the types of masks, procedures and controls we have in place at the City.

The Government of Alberta's [Guidance for Wearing Non-medical Face Masks for the General Public](#)