Frequently Asked Questions

Respiratory masks

Updated 4.7.2020

The use of a face covering is not meant to be a substitute for following social distancing, hand washing hygiene, and other safety recommendations provided on this page and elsewhere.

Why is CDC recommending face coverings?

CDC recommends that people wear a cloth face covering to cover their nose and mouth in the community setting. This is to protect people around you if you are infected but do not have symptoms.

Do I have to wear a face covering?

CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies). U.S.-based Verizon employees who are reporting to work outside of their homes should comply with this guidance from the CDC.

In locations where masks or face coverings may be required for specific types of work or by a local law requirement, we expect employees to comply with those requirements.

What types of face covering can I wear?

Face coverings may include bandana-style masks, homemade cloth masks and other coverings similar to surgical masks or N95-type masks. CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.

CDC does not recommend individuals wear approved N95 masks or surgical masks. N95 and surgical masks are in short supply and are critically needed for healthcare workers and medical first responders.

Why is CDC recommending cloth face coverings instead of medical grade face masks?

Surgical masks and N95 respirators are in short supply and should be reserved for healthcare workers or other medical first responders, as recommended by CDC guidance.

Do I still need to stay at least 6 feet away from people if wearing a cloth face covering?

Yes, wearing cloth face coverings is an additional public health measure employees should take to reduce the spread of COVID-19. CDC still recommends that you stay at least 6 feet away from other people (social distancing), frequently wash your hands and take other everyday preventive actions.

Who should not wear cloth face coverings?

According the the CDC, cloth face coverings should not be placed on children younger than 2 years of age, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cover without assistance.
Will Verizon provide a face covering?
Verizon will attempt, to the extent possible, to make face coverings available to employees who are reporting to work outside of their homes so that they can be worn.

Depending on availability, those coverings may include bandana-style masks, surgical-type masks and coverings similar to N95-type masks. When an N95-type mask is made available for this purpose, it will be solely for use as a face covering (and accordingly, it may include N95s that have passed the manufacturer’s expiration date). Employees are encouraged to bring their own face coverings from home, and can follow instructions on the CDC site to make them.

When will Verizon be able to supply face coverings?
Our supply chain team is working to send face covering for employees who are working outside of their home as quickly as possible. Face coverings will begin to be distributed as early as Tuesday, April 7 at some field operations locations. Most locations will receive face coverings later in the week. The exact timing of the distribution will be determined by how quickly face coverings can be acquired.

What type of face covering will I receive?
Depending on availability, coverings may include, bandana-style masks, surgical-style face coverings and/or N95-type masks that have passed the manufacturer’s expiration date.

Are the N95s past the manufacturer’s expiration date acceptable to wear as face coverings?
Yes.

The CDC has indicated that in the face of this emergency, the U.S. Government believes that N95s beyond their manufacturer-designated shelf life should provide greater respiratory protection than surgical/medical masks alone, improvised mouth and nose covers (e.g., bandanas), or no protection at all.

Note this does not apply if you are wearing an N95 as a respirator under circumstances when an N95 would typically be required (e.g., certain work that involves potential asbestos exposure). In those cases, you will continue to be given a non-expired N95.

Do I need to shave?
You do not need to shave to wear a face covering, including an N95 worn as a face covering. In order to wear an N95 mask as a respirator (rather than a face covering), your face must be clean-shaven to ensure a good fit.

Can I bring my own face covering?
Yes, employees may choose to bring their own face coverings.

Does it matter what material I use when making my face covering?
According to the CDC, cloth face coverings can be made from household items. They should include multiple layers of fabric and allow for breathing without restriction.

View the video on how to make your own cloth face covering.
Can I wear a scarf?
You want coverage that is tightly woven and close-fitting. In general, a scarf may be loosely knit with many holes or not fit closely to your face so it would not be as effective as a face covering.

Can I reuse face coverings?
Yes, face coverings may be reused as long as they are in good condition. There is no way of determining the maximum possible number of safe reuses. If reusing an N95 or N95 like respirator, the CDC advises to hang used respirators in a designated storage area or keep them in a clean, breathable container such as a paper bag between uses.

How does one safely sterilize/clean a cloth face covering?
According to the CDC, a washing machine should suffice in properly washing a face covering.

Should cloth face coverings be washed or otherwise cleaned regularly? How regularly?
Yes. CDC has indicated that they should be routinely washed depending on the frequency of use.

What if my coworkers choose to not wear a face covering?
At this time the CDC is recommending but not requiring the use of face coverings. There are reasons an employee cannot wear a face covering and you should respect their decision. Wearing cloth face coverings is an additional public health measure employees should take to reduce the spread of COVID-19. CDC still recommends that you stay at least 6 feet away from other people (social distancing), frequent hand cleaning and other everyday preventive actions.

In locations where there is a local law requiring an employee to wear a face covering, we expect employees to comply with those requirements.

What if I need to supervise or work in close proximity to a vendor or supplier and they are not willing or able to wear a facial covering?
Consistent with the CDC guidance, we are recommending that our vendors, partners and suppliers wear a facial covering in situations where social distancing is difficult or areas with significant community-based transmission. If a vendor refuses to or is unable to wear a facial covering, you will interact or be in close proximity to the vendor performing work at a Verizon facility or a Verizon job site and you feel unsafe you should call your supervisor and reschedule the work.

In locations where there is a local law requiring an employee to wear a face covering, we expect employees to comply with those requirements.

How do I put on or take off a face covering?
Individuals should be careful not to touch their eyes, nose, and mouth when removing their face covering and wash hands immediately after removing. Please use the videos for more information about how to put on, fit and take off your particular face covering.

If wearing the mask for the second time, avoid touching the front of the mask and wash your hands immediately after touching.

- Properly putting on, fitting, and taking off an N95 respirator
- Properly putting on and taking off a face covering
If I have a N95 can I wear it?
If you have your own N95 respirator you can use it as a face covering; however, CDC does not recommend that individuals wear current N95 masks because they are in short supply and are critically needed for healthcare workers and medical first responders.

If an employee is voluntarily using a non-expired N95 mask for their own protection, they must be provided a copy of the EHS voluntary use of respiratory mask safety lesson plan to comply with Appendix D of the OSHA respiratory protection standard. This must be documented in their learning record.

What if an employee feels they cannot wear a face cover?
Employees reporting to work outside of their homes should comply with CDC guidance but Verizon is not requiring employees to wear face coverings.

In locations where masks may be required for specific types of work (e.g., certain work that involves potential lead exposure), or by a local law, we expect employees to comply with those requirements. If an employee assigned to such work is not able to wear a mask, he/she should discuss with his/her supervisor.

Can I use a plastic face shield?
Yes, plastic face shields can be worn as a supplement to social distancing and good hand washing hygiene. A face shield is not intended to protect against airborne particles or splashes; however, it will assist in preventing you from touching your face.

Can the plastic face shield be used in conjunction with the face covering?
Yes, plastic face shields can be worn as a supplement to other face covering, social distancing and appropriate hand washing hygiene.

Do retail customers have to wear face covering?
In our retail stores, we are alerting customers when they schedule appointments that they will be required to wear a mask or face covering to enter our stores. Store signs are also being updated to reflect this requirement. If a customer arrives at our store without a face covering they will be asked to reschedule the appointment.

Do vendors have to wear face covering?
We will be informing vendors that their employees should wear a face covering to enter our facilities. If a face covering is required by a local law, we expect vendors to comply with those requirements.

Why are we requiring customers or vendors to wear a cloth face covering but not employees?
We recommend that all employees wear a cloth face covering in accordance with the CDC recommendation. If a face covering is required by a local law, we expect our employees to comply with those requirements.
We are sourcing cloth face coverings as quickly as possible for distribution. We also encourage employees to bring their own cloth face coverings.

We are requiring customers to wear face coverings as an additional step to protect our employees. Our employees have been instructed to follow social distancing and use appropriate cleaning practices. Although we educate our customers before their appointment, we believe that requiring them to wear a face covering is an important step to protect our employees.