



ILA-USMX JOINT SAFETY COMMITTEE

The Novel Coronavirus

Workers and Employers Want to Know

Q. What's all this “stuff” about face masks? Do they work? How well?

A. It's important to know that all facemasks/respirators, if properly worn, will provide a given level of protection against transmitting and/or acquiring Covid-19 infection. On the waterfront, we typically see three different types of respiratory protection being worn for that purpose.

1). Surgical-Type Facemasks:



Surgical masks are disposable after a day's use, and with a reasonably good facial seal provide protection against both the transmission of virus particles and the (somewhat less effective) acquisition of virus particles. They come in a number of different designs, the most effective of which are the multi-layer type. In high demand markets, surgical mask designs are among the most readily obtainable.

2). Cloth Facemasks



Cloth facemasks are basic filtration facepieces that are reusable after light washing, and are among the most convenient of all means of respiratory protection. Some, like the one shown at left, are essentially “homemade” and, depending upon the type of materials used in their construction, offer varying degrees of affirmative protection. Cloth facemasks are becoming more and more obtainable online, even in high demand markets.

Working Together For The Benefit Of All

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Here are a few pointers for putting on and taking off a cloth mask:

- Place your mask over your mouth and nose.
- Tie it behind your head or use ear loops and make sure it's snug.
- Don't touch your mask while wearing it.
- If you accidentally touch your mask, wash or sanitize your hands.
- Remove the mask by untying it or lifting off the ear loops without touching the front of the mask or your face.
- Wash your hands immediately after removing your mask.
- Regularly wash your mask with soap and water in the washing machine. It's fine to launder it with other clothes.

3). N-95 Respirators:



N-95 (NIOSH 95%) respirators are also meant to be disposable, but with exemplary hygiene practices (given their current high market demand in medical and hospital settings), can be reused for short periods. Like any form of respiratory protection, their effectiveness is best when a good facial seal can be secured. In that light, it is important to ensure that both elastic straps are used.

The ILA~USMX Joint Safety Committee has devised a continuing series of useful publications that have particular relevance to the Covid-19 experience at our ports.

Please find them at the respective webpages of both ILA and USMX.

Here are the links to those webpages:

<https://ilaunion.org/osh-circular/>

<https://www.usmx.com/resources/public/downloadable-safety-bulletins-and-various-safety-resources>

Please remember: Frequent handwashing/disinfection and social distancing also play crucial roles in limiting the spread of Covid-19!