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BOSTON, MA

MEMO

TO: All City of Boston Employees
FROM: Emme Handy, Chief of Administration and Finance
SUBJECT: City of Boston's Recommendation for All Boston Residents to Wear a 'Face Covering' when Going Out in Public
DATE: April 5, 2020

What is the Recommendation and Why is it Being Made?

It is important to remember that social distancing remains the primary strategy to reduce the spread of COVID-19. However, based on evidence that some level of transmission is occurring by people who are asymptomatic and may not know they have COVID-19, the CDC on April 3, 2020, issued a recommendation that everyone cover their mouth and nose with a "face covering" when "in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain" in order to help reduce the risk that someone may unknowingly spread the virus. Based on this guidance, the Boston Public Health Commission and the Mayor are now advising all residents to wear a "face covering" when out in public in instances where social distancing cannot be predictably maintained. Accordingly, effective Monday, April 6, 2020, the City of Boston will begin requiring its employees to wear a "face covering" when reporting to physical work locations.

It is important to remember that the face covering does not protect the person wearing the covering from contracting COVID-19. Instead, it is to protect those whom you are interacting with. Thus, even when wearing a face covering it is important to continue to practice social distancing.

NOTE: Employees who continue to report to work in direct care and other settings where personal protective equipment (PPE) and related guidelines have already been issued should continue to use PPE in accordance with those guidelines, as directed by their programs/departments.

What is a "Face Covering"

A “face covering” is **not** necessarily a face mask. The administration is NOT recommending all employees or the public begin wearing masks. Instead, a “face covering” is a cloth, scarf, bandana, etc. that can cover a person’s mouth and nose.

- It should be fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face and secured with ties or ear loops,
- Include multiple layers of fabric,
- Allow for breathing without restriction, and
- Be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape.

These can be made at home using intact, close-weave cloth that allow comfortable breathing. For those interested in creating their own face covering, [here](#) are instructions provided by the CDC, there are examples of both a folded model and a model that is sewn.

A face covering is NOT a surgical mask or N95 masks. Those masks should continue to be reserved for emergency personnel and healthcare providers who need them in order to keep safe when providing critical and emergency services.

What Will the City Provide Employees Required to Wear A “Face Covering”?

Beginning Monday, April 6, 2020, the City will provide all employees reporting to work at a physical location a “face covering.”

The City will endeavor to acquire and distribute reusable cloth face coverings as soon as practicable to employees reporting to physical work locations. In the interim, the City encourages employees with reusable cloth face coverings to bring their own to work.

For employees who do not own a reusable cloth face covering and who are reporting to physical work locations, the City will provide surgical masks in the interim. Please note, the guidance on the use of such masks permits for the reuse of these masks when they have not been exposed to symptomatic persons. Face masks should be carefully folded so that the outer surface is held inward and against itself to reduce contact with the outer surface during storage. The folded mask can be stored between uses in a clean sealable paper bag or breathable container. **Note:** face masks should be discarded if soiled, damaged, or hard to breathe through.

For those using reusable cloth face coverings, they should be laundered daily to ensure they remain clean. If reusing without cleaning, advice about storage outlined above should be followed. In addition, employees are reminded that such face coverings must comply with all City rules and policies regarding professionalism in the workplace. Accordingly, no face covering should express offensive language or graphics, discriminatory language or graphics, political opinions, religious views, or otherwise be viewed as violating City policies or procedures.

How to Safely Remove Your 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.