



March 3, 2020

Subject: COVID-19 - Guidance for Respirators & Masks for Non-Healthcare Personnel

Dear City and County Employees:

Here are the facts:

- A paper face mask is helpful only to prevent you from infecting others.
- N-95 respirators must be specially fitted in order to be effective in reducing the risk of disease. They are used by health care providers who are caring for infectious patients.
- People who wear masks or N-95 respirators improperly actually increase their own risk of infection, because they may continually adjust them by touching their faces.
- There is a national shortage of both N-95 respirators and masks. The City is reserving its supply for those who need them: patients and health care providers.

The best way for you to reduce your risk of getting sick from COVID-19 is to do the same things you do to avoid seasonal colds or the flu:

- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (the time it takes to hum “Happy Birthday” twice);
- Cover your cough or sneeze (use your elbow or shoulder, not your hands);
- Stay home if you are sick;
- Get your flu shot to protect against flu or symptoms similar to COVID-19; and
- If you have recently returned from a region with ongoing COVID-19 infections, monitor your health and follow the instructions of public health officials. For more information go to:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

You can also prepare for the other possible disruptions caused by an outbreak:

- Make sure you have a supply of all essential medications for your family;
- Make a childcare plan in case you or a care giver become sick;
- Make arrangements about how your family will manage a school closure; and
- Make a plan for how you can care for a sick family member without getting sick yourself.

**Remember: COVID-19 has nothing to do with a person’s race or ethnicity. We must continue to treat our co-workers and members of the public with courtesy and respect.**

Stay up to date on this rapidly evolving situation by visiting [www.sfdph.org](http://www.sfdph.org) or [www.sf72.org](http://www.sf72.org) and the CDC’s website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov>.

The City’s priorities are to promote public health and to keep City employees safe. Thank you for your cooperation as we respond to this public health challenge.

Sincerely,

Micki Callahan  
Human Resources Director