Mask Usage for COVID-19 - General Info

On April 3rd, the Centers for Diseases Control (CDC) recommended wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies), especially in areas of significant community-based transmission. It is critical to emphasize that maintaining 6-feet social distancing remains important to slowing the spread of the virus. Face coverings will help to slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others. The use of a mask will protect workers from others who may be asymptomatic or have symptoms of COVID-19 that have not yet been recognized. Due to this, EHS will be providing surgical masks for certain essential staff, prioritizing those that have to perform tasks in a way that social distancing > 6 feet cannot be maintained.

Departments with essential staff that can maintain social distancing while working can also be provided masks (based on availability) for staff to wear on a voluntary basis. The use of homemade cloth masks are also an alternative for voluntary use. Follow CDC guidance for instructions on how to make the masks and how to care for the masks.

Donning and Use
- Before putting on the mask, wash your hands properly.
- Don the mask by placing the single strap around your head but keeping above your ears and pinching the metal bar on the bridge of your nose.
- Do not touch your face or mask after putting on the mask.
- The mask should cover your nose and mouth.
- If conducting work where the mask may get dirty or dusty, a face shield should be worn to protect the mask.
- For close proximity work, masks should be changed out after 12 hours of use, or if the mask becomes wet, soiled, or compromised in some fashion.

Removal
- Remove the mask carefully, using the strap and avoid touching any part of the mask.
- Place the mask in a paper storage bag for reuse. Mark the bag with your name.
- Wash your hands after removing the mask.

It is important to continue to keep about 6 feet between yourself and others. Everyone must also continue to self-monitor for symptoms and not report to work if you are ill. The primary symptoms to watch for are:
- Fever (>100.4)
- Cough
- Shortness of Breath

Any staff who show symptoms of COVID-19 should leave the workplace, return home and follow guidance from their primary care provider.