Use of Courtesy Face Coverings

OVERVIEW: This document provides information on the use and care of courtesy face coverings. Courtesy face coverings are not considered Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). However, these cloth face coverings can be an effective in reducing the transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and a complement to social distancing, handwashing, and other mitigation measures.

WHY FACE COVERINGS ARE IMPORTANT

- Cloth face coverings may slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others.
- Face coverings reduce the spread of potentially infectious droplets released by the wearer as they talk, cough or sneeze.
- Using a face covering helps prevent the wearer from touching their mouth or nose.
- Remember this saying: “My face covering protects you; your face covering protects me.”

REQUIREMENTS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SOURCING FOR NMSU EMPLOYEES

- Employees MUST wear a courtesy face covering whenever required by NMSU administrative procedures, New Mexico Department of Health Orders or specific department or work-group protocols.
- When use is required, courtesy face coverings do not need to be worn when eating, drinking, when alone in a private office or vehicle, or when use will adversely affect an employee’s safety or health.
  - If more than one person is in a university vehicle, all people in the vehicle must wear a courtesy face covering. This includes open-air utility vehicles.
  - If face coverings are required and wearing it will adversely affect an employee’s safety or health, then contact EHSRM or the Aggie Health and Wellness Center for further guidance.
- Even when not required, the use of face coverings by employees is encouraged for the reasons cited in the Why Face Coverings are Important section above.
- If required, employees should request a face covering from their supervisor. An individual may also request a face covering from the New Mexico Department of Health. If using a homemade face covering, it should meet the face covering guidance put out by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the New Mexico Department of Health.

RESERVE RESPIRATORS FOR HEALTHCARE AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE OPERATIONS: N95 respirators and surgical masks are designed to protect those working in situations with a likelihood of coronavirus exposure; medical grade masks should not be used as a courtesy face covering.
USE AND CARE OF CLOTH FACE COVERINGS: Best practices for fabric and cloth face coverings are as follows:

- Most effective types of cloth material to use
  - High thread count cotton pillowcases or sheets
  - Multilayered
  - Quilting fabric
  - T-shirts
- Wash all face coverings before first use. Commercial products are not sterilized.
- Wash the face covering daily after use, wash in hot water with regular detergent and dry completely on a hot setting.
- Wash or sanitize hands before putting on a face covering and immediately after removing it,
- Ensure the face covering fits snugly around the mouth and nose.
- Do not wear the face covering if it is damp or wet with mucus or saliva.
- Remove the face covering from behind without touching the front.

THE BEST DEFENSE AGAINST COVID-19 IS TO

- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds frequently throughout the day.
- Practice social distancing. Keep at least 6 feet of separation between yourself and others when possible.
- Wear a face covering.

ADDITIONAL FACE COVERING RESOURCES

- CDC Cloth Face Coverings FAQ Page
- Penn State Physical Plant EH&S: COVID-19 Universal Masking Cloth Mask Guidance

RESOURCES FOR THIS DOCUMENT

- NMSU Employee and Administrative Protocols for Pandemic
- CDC Guidance on the Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19
- New Mexico Department of Health Guidance on Cloth Face Coverings