



## Environmental Health Safety & Risk Management

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### Face Covering Protocol for NMSU Stakeholders

**OVERVIEW:** This protocol provides information on the requirements, exceptions and care of face coverings for all NMSU Stakeholders. Face coverings are not considered Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). However, these cloth face coverings may be effective in reducing the transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and are 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.”*

**APPLICABILITY:** This protocol applies to all NMSU Stakeholders on site at any NMSU location, unless exempted below in *Exceptions* section of this document. For purposes of this protocol, NMSU Stakeholders are defined as, university personnel, students, contractors, vendors, volunteers and visitors.

#### NMSU STAKEHOLDER REQUIREMENTS FOR WEARING FACE COVERINGS

- All **MUST** wear a face covering as described by NMSU administrative procedures and the New Mexico Department of Health Orders.
- Current NM Public Health Order states; “All individuals shall wear a mask or multilayer cloth face covering in public settings except when eating, drinking, or exercising.” NMSU provides exceptions to this rule in Exceptions section below and only if other controls are established.
- Established personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements for other task-specific hazards other than SARS-CoV-2 virus takes precedent of this requirement and must be worn as required.
- If more than one person is in a university vehicle, all people in the vehicle **MUST** wear a face covering. This includes open-air utility vehicles.
- Face coverings do not need to be worn when alone in a private workspace or vehicle. If shared common work space or shared departmental vehicle, a face covering must be worn.
- Face coverings do not need to be worn when inside a private on-campus residential unit, unless NMSU personnel are present inside unit for university related business.
- Always use a face covering when in the presence of others. Always have a face covering available, even when not required. The use of face coverings by NMSU Stakeholders is encouraged for the reasons cited in the *Why Face Coverings are Important* section above.

Please contact EHS & Risk Management for assistance at (575) 646-3327 or [ehs@nmsu.edu](mailto:ehs@nmsu.edu)

Revised July 3, 2020

### **EXCEPTION FOR MEDICAL OR RELIGIOUS CONCERN:**

- Individuals with underlying health conditions, that wearing a face covering would cause additional risk, may request an exception for medical concern:
  - An employee may request an exception through the Office of Institutional Equity using the [Petition for Accommodation Form](#).
  - A student may request an exception through Student Accessibility Services using the [Petition for Accommodation/Intake Form](#).
- Individuals with requests for exceptions on face coverings based on religious concerns may do so through the Office of Institutional Equity:
  - An employee may request an exception using the [Request for Religious Accommodation Form](#)
  - A student may request an exception using the [Request for Student Religious Accommodation Form](#)

**EXCEPTIONS FOR HEALTH, SAFETY OR SECURITY CONCERNS:** When an individual feels that wearing a face covering provides a health, safety or security risk, the individual must stop work or activity and bring the concern to the attention of a direct supervisor, instructor, or resident director for further evaluation. Alternative controls must be established and are described further in this document. Direct supervisors, department heads or resident directors must review proposed alternative controls and approve.

Such risks to consider, but not limited to, are tasks:

- Requiring physical exertion and unrestricted breathing (e.g. ladder work; operation of heavy equipment; outdoor work in extreme heat).
- In an environment that a face covering would hinder communication or put additional strain on an individual's voice (e.g. face to face classroom instruction; facilities workers in various operations).

**ALTERNATIVE CONTROLS:** For any of the above exceptions to be granted, one or any combination of alternative controls must be evaluated and approved:

- Social distancing of six feet or more.
- Face shields, Plexiglas barrier or other controls.
- Individuals must have a face covering in their possession at all times and ready to wear when encountering and interacting with others.
- Individuals must sanitize, where applicable, equipment, tools or surface areas utilized during task activities.

### **ALTERNATE FACE COVERING PROTOCOL FOR FACE TO FACE INSTRUCTION:**

- A cloth face covering must be worn when not wearing the face shield or using a Plexiglas barrier (i.e. entry and exit to classroom, set-up of classroom).
- Some classrooms will have engineered barrier protection installed for instructor to use as an alternative control.
- Face Shield with full-face coverage that wraps around the sides of the face and extends to below the chin may be used as an alternate to a cloth face covering during lecture and instruction.
- Social distancing must be applied when wearing the face shield. A minimum of six feet away from students at all times.
- If closer proximity to students is required, then a cloth face covering must be worn with the face shield.
- The face shield should not be shared, and must be cleaned and disinfected after each use.

## FACE COVERING AVAILABILITY:

- NMSU personnel will be provided a cloth face covering from their supervisor that is multi-layered. Supply information is located on [NMSU COVID-19 Protective Supplies Website](#).
- NMSU students will be provided a cloth face covering that is multi-layered. Students moving into campus housing will receive a face covering as part of the welcome home package. More information will be released for commuter students on distribution process at a later date.
- Face shield availability will be posted on the [COVID-19 Protective Supplies Website](#) (once vendor is secured).
- Using a homemade or personal face covering is allowed, but it must meet the face covering guidance put out by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and the [New Mexico Department of Health](#).

## ADMINISTRATION OF FACE COVERING PROTOCOL

- **Personnel/Affiliated/Volunteers:**
  - Employees are expected to comply with this face covering protocol as a condition of employment, as well as, for the health and safety of themselves and other NMSU Stakeholders.
  - Supervisors are required to ensure all employees have a thorough understanding of these requirements and provide additional education and training as needed to promote compliance.
  - If an employee does not comply, the supervisor will notify Employee Labor Relations for further guidance or refer the employee to the Office of Institutional Equity to request an accommodation.
- **Students:**
  - Students are expected to follow face coverings requirements at all times while at any NMSU location.
  - If a student is without a face covering, a verbal request should be made to promote compliance and educate the individual in the health and safety of themselves and other NMSU Stakeholders.
  - If a student does not comply, a report of a concern should be made via email to the Office of the Dean of Students at [DOS@nmsu.edu](mailto:DOS@nmsu.edu) for follow-up as per protocols outlined in the Student Social Code of Conduct.
- **Vendors and Contractors** are expected to comply with this face covering protocol as condition of doing work with NMSU.
- **All other NMSU Stakeholders to include members of the public and visitors:** NMSU is committed to maintaining a respectful and safe campus for all NMSU Stakeholders. If any of our Stakeholders see someone without a face covering in accordance with this protocol, please do not confront that person beyond a polite verbal request for compliance to educate and encourage the use of face coverings. It is not appropriate to notify law enforcement.

**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 coverings.

**USE AND CARE OF CLOTH FACE COVERINGS:** It will be the responsibility of each individual to maintain their face covering by following the best practices as described below:

- Most effective types of cloth material to use
  - High thread count cotton pillowcases or sheets
  - Multilayered
  - Quilting fabric
  - T-shirts

### **USE AND CARE OF CLOTH FACE COVERINGS, continued**

- Ensure the face covering material does not pose any additional risk to job specific function (e.g. electricians).
- Wash all face coverings before first use. The commercial products are not sterilized.
- Wash the face covering after every day of use; wash in hot water with regular detergent and dry completely on a hot setting or air dry with sunlight.
- Before putting on a face covering and immediately after removing, wash hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Ensure the face covering fits snugly around the mouth and nose.
- Do not wear the face covering if it is damp or wet from spit or mucus.
- 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 with soap and water 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.

### **RESOURCES FOR THIS DOCUMENT**

- [CDC Guidance on the Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19](#)
- [New Mexico Department of Health - Guidance on Face Coverings](#)
- [NMSU Employee and Administrative Protocols for Pandemic](#)
- [Dona Ana County Proposed Face Covering Ordinance](#)
- [Penn State Physical Plant EH&S: COVID-19 Universal Masking Cloth Mask Guidance](#)
- [University of Washington EH&S](#)
- [Protect Purdue Plan – Purdue University](#)
- [Texas A&M Face Covering Frequently Asked Questions](#)