

# COVID-19 GUIDANCE ON DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

## BACKGROUND

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is any type of specialized clothing, barrier product, or breathing device used to protect workers from serious injuries or illnesses while doing their jobs. These include gloves (vinyl, latex or nitrile); gowns; shoe and head covers; masks or respirators (N-95 respirator or higher); and other face and eye protection (goggles or a face shield).

As the commonwealth has responded to COVID-19 outbreaks across the state, the volume of PPE requests, the frequency for which those requests have come, and changes in the types of PPE required by different types of individuals has caused the Department of Health (Department) and the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) to revise the process for PPE requests from medical facilities and first responders. The following is a summary of those revised changes that more accurately reflects our current state in terms of response and PPE.

## WHO SHOULD WEAR PPE?

### PERSONNEL IN MEDICAL FACILITIES:

The following PPE is recommended for healthcare workers and staff in medical facilities:

- Implement universal masking—everyone who enters the facility, including non-clinical staff members, should wear a surgical or isolation mask (not a respirator).
  - If possible, symptomatic patients or residents should be masked during direct care.
- Continue to utilize recommended PPE (N-95 respirator or higher, gown, gloves, and eye protection) for confirmed COVID-19 cases.
- Implement [strategies to optimize the supply of PPE and equipment](#).

### FIRST RESPONDER COMMUNITY:

If a first responder must come in contact with an individual confirmed or suspected of having COVID-19, the minimum PPE recommendations include:

- A single pair of disposable examination gloves;
- Disposable isolation gown or single-use/disposable coveralls;
- Eye protection (e.g., goggles or disposable face shields; and
- N-95 or higher-level respirator. Facemasks are an acceptable alternative until the supply chain is restored.

### OTHERS:

Individuals who do not work in a healthcare setting or are not a first responder should **continue to wear homemade masks when they leave the home**; however, homemade masks are not considered PPE (e.g. “My mask protects you; your mask protects me.”). It is important that our healthcare professionals and first responders have the necessary equipment to remain safe, so only use PPE as recommended. More information is available on [universal masking on the Department’s website](#).

## HOW IS PPE PRIORITIZED?

The Department has determined that hospitals will no longer receive PPE directly from the commonwealth. Hospitals should act upon their established mutual aid agreement. If a hospital is unable to obtain PPE within the voluntary mutual aid agreement, the commonwealth will consider transferring PPE from one facility with excess supplies of PPE to another based on the [Governor’s Order](#).

At this time, the Department has chosen to prioritize congregate care settings with an identified and investigated need. Facilities that fall into this category include but are not limited to nursing homes, personal care homes, state centers, assisted living residences, residential drug treatment facilities, and group homes that service those with disabilities. Additionally, other state agencies like the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP), Department of Corrections (DOC), and Department of Human Services (DHS) for state hospitals are included in prioritization.

## WHAT STRATEGY IS USED TO DISTRIBUTE PPE?

The Department and PEMA utilize a variety of ways to determine what supplies facilities receive and when they receive them. Strategies include evaluating the organization's current supply, regional needs, burn rates, and specific facility-based needs. Additionally, the Department works with other state agencies to support identified and investigated outbreaks of COVID-19 within congregate care facilities. These facilities receive a combination of limited PPE and consultation based on CDC guidance.

## WHO RECEIVES PPE?

There is no longer a request process for PPE; instead, the Department of Health and PEMA will proactively distribute PPE to those with a critical need. PPE for first responders, county coroners and county jails will be provided to the county Emergency Management Agencies (EMA). PPE for skilled nursing facilities and congregate care settings will be provided directly to them by the Department of Health. These facilities should be in regular contact with their regulating authority to help make assessments and determine critical need.

Type of Facility	Channel	Strategy
Hospital	Mutual Aid Agreement	Hospitals should act upon their established mutual aid agreement. If a hospital is unable to obtain PPE within the voluntary mutual aid agreement, the commonwealth will consider transferring PPE from one facility with excess supplies of PPE to another based on the <a href="#">Governor's Order</a> .
Skilled Nursing Facility	Department of Health	Skilled nursing facilities receive direct proactive 'pushes' of PPE from the Department of Health based off an identified formula.
First Responders	County Emergency Management Agency	PPE for first responders will be provided to county EMAs. Those EMAs are responsible for prioritization, allocation and tracking of the PPE they provide.
Licensed Congregate Care Facilities	Department of Health	The Department of Health distributes PPE to congregate care facilities who have an identified and investigated need. Facilities should contact the agency or program office that licenses them if they have a critical need.
County Jail	County Emergency Management Agency	PPE for county jails will be provided to county EMAs. Those EMAs are responsible for prioritization, allocation and tracking of PPE they provide.
Coroner	County Emergency Management Agency	PPE for coroners will be provided to EMAs. Those EMAs are responsible for prioritization, allocation and tracking of PPE they provide.
State Agencies	Department of Health	The Department of Health provides PPE to all state agencies who have a component that would require usage of this equipment.
Other Health Care Professionals	Traditional Supply Chain	Other health care providers should utilize traditional supply chain opportunities. The Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) has created a <a href="#">Business-2-Business Interchanged Directory</a> to connect Pennsylvania businesses to organizations that are seeking various forms of PPE and other related items.
Non-Health Care Professionals	Traditional Supply Chain	Individuals who do not work in a healthcare setting or are not considered a first responder should continue to wear homemade masks when they leave the home. More information is available on <a href="#">universal masking on the Department's website</a> .  The Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) has created a <a href="#">Business-2-Business Interchanged Directory</a> to connect

		Pennsylvania businesses to organizations that are seeking various forms of PPE and other related items.
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## RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

Follow the CDC's [Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations](#)

Strategies to optimize PPE supply: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/>

EMS Information Bulletin 2020-16, PPE Reminders:

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/EMS/EMSIB%202020-16%20PPE%20Reminders.pdf>

What Firefighters Need to Know about Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19):

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/Firefighters%20Considerations%20COVID-19.pdf>

COVID-19 Guidance for Law Enforcement:

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/COVID-19%20Guidance%20for%20Law%20Enforcement.pdf>

Check-out these steps of [safe work practices](#) to protect yourself

For more information, visit <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx> or the [CDC website](#)