

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE
WASHINGTON, DC

FSIS NOTICE

15-22

3/15/22

REVISED AVAILABILITY OF PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT FOR INSPECTION PROGRAM PERSONNEL AND IN-COMMERCE PERSONNEL

I. PURPOSE

This notice cancels FSIS Notice 06-22, *Availability of Protective Equipment for Inspection Program Personnel and FSIS Notice 21-21, In-Commerce Personnel* and FSIS Notice *Continued Availability of Protective Equipment for Inspection Program Personnel and In-Commerce Personnel*. Their contents have been updated to be consistent with new USDA Departmental guidelines, [Updated COVID-19 Mask Guidance](#).

II. EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

A. On March 4, 2022, the Department issued new guidance on masking protocols for USDA employees at USDA facilities and worksites. The scope of this guidance includes inspection program personnel assigned to FSIS regulated establishments and In-Commerce personnel who visit, and conduct investigations of, FSIS regulated businesses. FSIS employees are now to follow the Department's [Updated COVID-19 Mask Guidance](#).

B. Per the CDC, masking protocols are now based on the [COVID-19 Community Level](#) in the county where an employee works. COVID-19 community levels will be updated on a weekly basis and released in the Department's "Big 3" email that goes out to all employees on Fridays. Employees are to reference the updated mask requirements to determine whether masking is required at their worksite each week.

C. FSIS masking protocols are as follows:

1. Where the COVID-19 Community Level is LOW: Employees are not required to wear masks in the facility or worksite, regardless of vaccination status.
2. Where the COVID-19 Community Level is MEDIUM: Employees are not required to wear masks in the facility or worksite, regardless of vaccination status.
3. Where the COVID-19 Community Level is HIGH: Employees are required to wear masks in the facility or worksite, regardless of vaccination status.

D. Face shields are no longer required but are still available for those who choose to wear them. Other safety protocols established in our [Workplace Safety Plan](#) remain in place.

E. Additionally, where a locality or establishment imposes more protective pandemic-related safety requirements, those requirements are to be followed in USDA facilities or employee worksites within that locality.

DISTRIBUTION: Electronic

NOTICE EXPIRES: 4/1/23

OPI: OPPD

F. Employees who perform official duties in more than one county are to follow the safety protocols for the county in which they work. In other words, an employee is required to wear a mask while working in a facility or worksite in a county where the COVID-19 Community Level is HIGH, but the same employee is not required to wear a mask while working in a different facility or worksite where the COVID-19 Community Level is LOW or MEDIUM.

G. FSIS employees with symptoms, a positive COVID-19 test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19 are to follow the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force [guidance for quarantine and isolation](#) and wear a mask for the required period consistent with [CDC guidance](#), regardless of COVID-19 community level.

H. Although masks will no longer be required in LOW or MEDIUM COVID community levels, some colleagues may choose to continue wearing masks in the workplace. All individuals can wear a mask or face shield if they choose regardless of COVID-19 Community Level. Masks and face shields are available to employees through the Materiel Management Service Center. Employees are to honor their colleagues' choices and demonstrate professionalism, empathy, and respect for one another.

III. N95 RESPIRATORS, CLOTH FACE COVERINGS, AND DISPOSABLE FACE MASKS AVAILABLE FOR FSIS IPP and IN-COMMERCE PERSONNEL TO ORDER

A. The Agency will continue to make disposable face masks and cloth face coverings available to all FSIS employees. The Agency will also make N95 respirators available to employees on a voluntary use basis. Employees may select from the options made available based upon breathability, comfort, and fit. All disposable face masks and cloth face coverings made available by the Agency meet the ASTM 3502-21 standard; N95 respirators provided by the Agency are NIOSH-approved.

B. In accordance with CDC guidance, employees are to wear a mask correctly and consistently for the best protection. If employees have to touch or adjust the mask often, then it does not fit properly. Employees may need to find a different mask or make adjustments;

C. Employees are to wear a mask that covers the nose and mouth and secures under the chin. Employees are to be sure that the mask fits snugly against the sides of the face; and

D. If the N95 respirator, disposable mask, or cloth face covering becomes wet or contaminated, employees are to replace it with a clean, dry one.

E. N95 respirators are provided for voluntary use ([OSHA Appendix D 1910.134](#)). Respirators are an effective method of protection against designated hazards when properly selected and worn. Employees who voluntarily wear respirators are to first review and sign the Appendix D Acknowledgement for employees, accessible through the link below, which is for employees using respirators when not required to do so under the Respiratory Protection Standard. Employees are to email the signed Appendix D form to their supervisor and block, copy, and paste gladyouaskedsafety@usda.gov into the email as a cc:. Before wearing an N95 respirator, review the instructions, fact sheet, and video provided here:

1. [Instructions](#);
2. Video on Donning and Doffing with seal checks: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tzpz5fko-fg> (from https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/topics/respirators/disp_part/donningdoffing.html)
3. Fact Sheet: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2010-133/pdfs/2010-133.pdf>

IV. FACE SHIELDS AND ANTI-FOG WIPES AND SPRAYS

A. The Agency will continue to make face shields available to Inspection Program Personnel, In-Commerce Personnel, and laboratory employees on a voluntary use basis; however, they are not required. When placing orders for face shields, employees are to select a model that is compatible with their helmet. Employees are to be sure to also order brackets and adapters that are compatible with the style of face shield selected. Please refer to Appendix A for the PPE Compatibility Guide to determine the supplemental parts that need to be ordered.

B. The Agency is continuing to make anti-fog wipes and sprays available to help defog face shields and improve visibility.

V. HAND SANITIZER AND DISINFECTANT WIPES

The Agency is continuing to make hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes available for order in different sizes.

VI. ORDERING PROCEDURES

A. FSIS personnel may place orders via the following methods:

1. Online via the ordering system at <https://www.bsc.usda.gov>; or
2. E-mail at cfpdc@usda.gov or Phone at 1-877-576-6329.

B. A list of protective items is posted at: [COVID-19 Pandemic Resources](#) and can be ordered via this link: [Office of Operations Materiel Management Service Center](#).

VII. QUESTIONS

Refer questions to the Office of Management, Administrative Services Division, Property Management Branch at propertymanagement@usda.gov.



Assistant Administrator
Office of Policy and Program Development