

Social Distancing and Face Covering Reinforcement

BACKGROUND

States and municipalities nationwide are moving through different stages of reopening while other states are re-imposing restrictions where hot spots and new cases are escalating. During this time of transition, it remains important for all employees to follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) protocols to provide the best defense and limit the resurgence of Coronavirus 2019 Disease (COVID-19).

Guidance for appropriate social distancing and use of face coverings is key for the health, safety and well-being of USPS employees and customers, particularly where mandates by states or municipalities may differ from CDC or USPS protocols.

Supply Management continues to procure and distribute products and supplies to support the USPS response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Topeka Material Distribution Center (MDC) is distributing three new face coverings that are being provided to targeted employee groups as a part of a phased, push distribution strategy.

Each of these products have been tested in operations, and reviewed by USPS Safety as well as the CDC. Each has been confirmed effective in limiting the spread of COVID-19. Non-respirator mask type products often include disclaimers as to the level of protection of the product against viruses. Importantly, face coverings are worn to reduce the distance of travel for droplets expelled from the mouth or nose of a positive individual toward others.

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The three products being deployed include the following coverings:

- Blue gaiter, hot-weather lightweight face covering: Distributed and are available for mail carriers, vehicle maintenance facility employees and others who work outside where average temperatures are expected to reach 90 degrees or higher this summer.
- Black cooling mask face coverings: Distributed to mail processing facilities. Targeted to employees who primarily work indoors at more than 275 processing plants.
- Gray adjustable face covering: Designed to be worn indoors or outdoors. Distribution is to every USPS, Postal Inspection Service and Office of Inspector General employee. District deployment is proceeding and will be followed to Area Offices and then Headquarters units.

Each of these face coverings is reusable and designed to be washed and worn again.



Ordering

The USPS Material Distribution Center in Topeka, KS, is initially automatically distributing these face coverings. District, area and headquarters sites **do not** have to place orders for these three coverings. Supplemental orders can be requested through the District Supplies Coordinators who will fill from their local inventories or request from the Topeka MDC.

When will the new coverings be received?

The blue hot-weather gaiters and black face coverings are currently being distributed to targeted district offices. District and area offices will also receive the gray masks first, followed by headquarters in Washington, DC, and each headquarters field unit. See chart for details.

Mask & Face Covering	Employee(s)	Ordering Information	Distribution Date	Number of Reuses
New Blue Hot-Weather Gaiter Covering NSN: 8415-18-000-6909	Targeted Carriers and VMF employees	Automatic Distribution from Topeka MDC	Began mid-June 2020	100+ washes
New Black Cooling Mask covering NSN: 6515-18-000-6920	Mail Processing employees	Automatic Distribution from Topeka MDC	Began mid-June 2020	125+ washes
New Gray adjustable cloth covering NSN: 6515-18-000-6919	Area and District employees	Automatic Distribution from Topeka MDC	Began mid-June 2020	140+ washes
New Gray adjustable cloth covering NSN: 6515-18-000-6919	HQ (DC), HQ field units, USPIS, USOIG employees	Automatic Distribution from Topeka MDC	Beginning July 2020	140+ washes
Disposable Surgical face mask NSN: 4240-18-000-2515	HQ, HQ Field Units and USPIS employees	District Supplies Coordinator	Started March 2020	one-time use
Hanes white cloth masks NSN: 6515-18-000-6807	District employees	District Supplies Coordinator	Started April 2020	up to 15 washes

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Staff Distribution

The gray adjustable coverings are individually packaged with 10 coverings per box and 100 boxes per case for a total of 1,000 coverings per case. Each employee should receive one (1) reusable/washable mask, not one pack per employee. This covering includes adjustable ear straps and nose bridge for a better fit. The coverings are intended for USPS employees only and should not be distributed to contractors or other non-USPS individuals.

The blue gaiter hot-weather covering comes packaged as a pack of two and both should be distributed to employees.

The black cooling mask is individually packaged and distribution is one per employee.

FAQS

1. Can employees request a choice of the 3 new face coverings?

Not all face covering types are being distributed to every facility. The face coverings were tested for suitability in different environments and working conditions. Supplemental orders will however be fulfilled as inventories are available by requesting through the District Supplies Coordinators who will fill from their local inventories or request from the Topeka MDC.

2. Are instructions provided to the employees on how to clean and care for each mask?

Below are specific care instructions. They will also be posted in the COVID-19 Playbook.

Care instructions/Durability with number of washes for cloth face coverings:

Blue Hot-Weather Gaiter - *Machine washable on cold with mild detergent. Do not use fabric softeners or bleach. Air or line dry. Do not iron. (Good for 100+ washes)*

Black Cooling Mask covering - *Machine wash warm with like colors. Do not bleach. Tumble dry high. Cool iron if needed. (High quality and will withstand 125+ washes)*

Gray adjustable cloth covering - *Machine wash warm with like colors. Do not bleach. Tumble dry low. Cool iron if needed. (Extremely durable and can withstand 140+ washes)*

White cotton masks (HHS – Hanes) - *Machine wash warm up to 15 times before discarding. Tumble dry high. Do not use bleach chemicals or disinfectant to wash this product.*

3. Can the mask and face coverings protect employees from COVID-19?

Face coverings reduce the distance of travel for droplets expelled from the mouth or nose of a positive individual. These coverings will help protect the people around you. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cloth face coverings are [most likely to reduce the spread of the coronavirus](#) when they are widely used in public settings.

4. Can employees wear their own personal face coverings?

Yes. Employees are authorized to wear their own personal face coverings.