

Face Mask Use for Natural Gas Utility Workers Entering Premises During COVID-19 Pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, natural gas utilities continue to be recognized as providers of an essential service, including by the Government of Canada. Utility workers may need to enter various premises to perform critical work functions such as responding to odour calls and performing appliance reights. You may find them wearing a form of face mask for your protection and theirs.

The Canadian Gas Association (CGA) has compiled detailed information from leading authorities for its utility members and offers it in this condensed version for public use. Please note that CGA is not an authority on medical recommendations.

Types of Face Covers

There are two types of face coverings: respirators and non-respirators.



Respirators

These are devices regulated by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) that create a seal between the face and respirator and require fit testing. Some are equipped with filters that trap aerosol droplets and particulate as small as 0.3 microns in diameter (e.g. N95 masks).



Non-respirator face covers

These devices do not create seals nor in general do they include specialized filters. They provide a simple barrier preventing aerosol droplets from the wearer being expelled into the atmosphere and onto surfaces. Likewise, they act as a barrier to aerosol droplets from others. These devices include surgical masks, cloth face covers, and others.



Do Masks Protect the Wearer?

Respirators (e.g. N95, P100) **do protect the wearer** from dangerous aerosols and particulate.

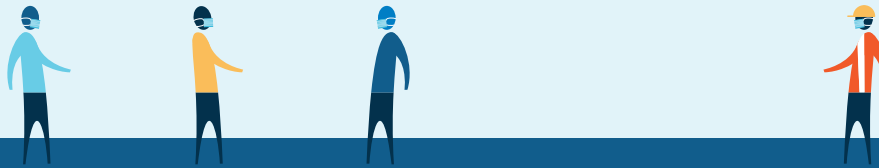
Non-respirators (e.g. non-medical masks, cloth face coverings) **offer some protection to the wearer**, and protect others from contaminants that may be present in the wearer's bodily fluids.

Should Everyone Wear a Facemask?

Evidence suggests that COVID-19 can be transmitted by “patients who never develop symptoms (asymptomatic) and patients not yet symptomatic (pre-symptomatic).”¹ Therefore, authorities are increasingly encouraging everyone to consider donning a simple cloth face covering (i.e. a non-respirator mask) as a means of protecting others and slowing down transmission of the virus.

Utilities’ Guidelines for Wearing Face Coverings

Natural gas utilities should have risk-based practices to support workers entering premises that outline when to use personal protective equipment (PPE), especially when physical distancing cannot be maintained. Utilities may also consider establishing guidelines for the wearing of non-respirator masks such as simple cloth face coverings.



Hygiene and Physical Distancing

Mask or not, for maximum protection the following must be employed to the greatest extent possible:



Keep physical distance

Limit exposure to others as much as possible, maintain 6’, 2m, 2 arms’ length at a minimum.

Clean hands

Wash with soap for 20 seconds, or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.



Do not touch face

Always remember to avoid touching one’s face (wearing face masks can help discourage face-touching).

Cover

Cough and sneeze into your elbow or a tissue (that is then disposed of), or consider covering your mouth and nose with a cloth covering.



Clean and disinfect

Ensure frequently touched surfaces are kept clean.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/clinical-guidance-management-patients.html#Asymptomatic>