



N/R/P95 Reuse

Introduction:

In times of crisis, the CDC and NIOSH understand that the re-use of disposable facemasks may be necessary. There are 3 main ratings for disposable masks: N, R, & P. "N" is rated for particulates, "R" is rated for particulates and oil based vapors for up to 8 hours, and "P" is rated for particulates and oil based vapors for an indefinite time period. The CDC defines the re-use of masks as "The practice of using the same N95 masks for multiple encounters with patients but removing it after each encounter". This practice has been used for decades and is considered safe if the mask is functioning, and proper guidelines are followed. One of the biggest risks is that the outside of the mask can be contaminated so it is important to wash your hands each time you handle the outside of the mask.

CDC Guidelines:

- Discard N95 respirators following use during aerosol generating procedures.
- Discard N95 respirators contaminated with blood, respiratory or nasal secretions, or other bodily fluids from patients.
- Discard N95 respirators following close contact with any patient co-infected with an infectious disease requiring contact precautions.
- Consider use of a cleanable face shield (preferred) over an N95 respirator and/or other steps (e.g., masking patients, use of engineering controls), when feasible to reduce surface contamination of the respirator.
- Hang used respirators in a designated storage area or keep them in a clean, breathable container such as a paper bag between uses. To minimize potential cross-contamination, store respirators so that they do not touch each other and the person using the respirator is clearly identified. Storage containers should be disposed of or cleaned regularly.
- Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after touching or adjusting the respirator (if necessary, for comfort or to maintain fit).
- Avoid touching the inside of the respirator. If inadvertent contact is made with the inside of the respirator, discard the respirator and perform hand hygiene as described above.
- Use a pair of clean (non-sterile) gloves when donning a used N95 respirator and performing a user seal check. Discard gloves after the N95 respirator is donned and any adjustments are made to ensure the respirator is sitting comfortably on your face with a good seal.

In summary:

The re-use of disposable masks is considered safe in settings where an SCWA employee is entering a customer's home. It is important to wash your hands after each use and store it properly between uses. Remember, these masks are designed to block particulates from entering the lungs over a full shift of work. We are using them for way less than they are intended for which means the mask will not get clogged and will remain highly function for multiple wears.