

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

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Dear Essential Business:

We appreciate the vital service that you play in sustaining our community during the stay at home mandate due to COVID-19. Information about the virus and its effects has changed rapidly over the past few weeks, leading to changes in public health guidance.

Data now suggests that many who are infected with COVID-19 are not symptomatic. For that reason, the New Orleans Health Department recommends that members of the public wear cloth face coverings when doing essential activities, such as grocery shopping. It is especially important for **essential workers**, such as those in your business, to wear face coverings as they are coming into contact with many people throughout the day. In particular, employees who participate in high public traffic activities – store cashiers, techs, bank tellers, etc – are most at risk of virus transmission from repeated exposures. For that reason, the Health Department **strongly encourages face coverings and gloves** for ALL your employees who will be interacting with the public.

At this time, you should **NOT** be purchasing medical grade masks for employees, which are in short supply. It is extremely important that surgical and N95 masks are reserved for those who need them most and have the highest risk of infection, like healthcare workers.

Face coverings are only a minimal level of protection, and we still recommend that the general public **stay home** except for essential needs and always avoid close contact with others. In the coming days, we plan to stand up a collection & distribution site for cloth face coverings. We encourage you to purchase through local businesses and/or sewers if at all possible. An instructional video on how to properly wear face coverings is at ready.nola.gov/#masks – please share with employees before they begin wearing them, so that they can offer benefit rather than increased risk.

Keeping essential business employees healthy and safe is critical to our getting through this outbreak, and entering into a safe recovery when appropriate. Thank you for all you are doing to support our community.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Avegno, MD
Director, City of New Orleans Health Department

