

27 February 2020

Guidance on Use of Masks by the Food Industry

INTRODUCTION

This document provides guidance to the food industry on the use of masks taking into consideration SFA's licensing requirements. The food industry in this document refers to all establishments involved in food including importers, processors, slaughterhouses, farms and retail.

Masks refer to coverings for the mouth and nostrils. They are commonly available as face (cloth) masks, paper masks, surgical masks, spit guards, N95 masks or respirators. Masks may be disposable (e.g. paper masks, surgical masks, N95 masks) or reusable (e.g. cloth masks, spit guard). Reusable respirators with filter cartridges can be used as an alternative to N95 masks. Both reusable respirators and N95 masks need to be properly fit tested for the user.

Food industry members are expected to do due diligence in assessing and identifying employees who should wear adequate protection to ensure food hygiene and safety, as well as to minimise any transmission of diseases from animals.

WHEN TO WEAR MASKS AND WHICH MASKS CAN BE USED

Food Processing/ Manufacturing Establishments	SFA requires those handling cooked or ready-to-eat food to wear some form of cloth/paper masks or spit/mouth guards to prevent them from coughing or sneezing onto food.
Poultry Farms	<p>SFA requires those entering production areas, where they will have direct contact/handle poultry to wear masks to prevent the introduction of disease to poultry in the farms. Such employees can wear cloth/paper masks.</p> <p>However, employees handling potentially sick animals should wear N95 masks. This is to protect employees from diseases that may be transmitted from sick poultry.</p>

<p>Pig and Poultry Slaughterhouses</p>	<p>To protect employees from diseases that may be transmitted from animals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees who handle or have direct contact with animals, or work on the slaughtering line are urged to wear N95 masks. If N95 masks are not available, employees can wear surgical masks. • Employees who handle animal carcasses or viscera should wear surgical masks.
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For all other food industry members such as importers and retailers (e.g. hawkers, restaurants and caterers), SFA does not require employees handling or preparing food to wear masks.

WHEN TO CHANGE OR CLEAN MASKS

- When disposable masks (such as paper, surgical or N95 masks) are used, change the masks once they become moist, soiled or damaged. Disposable masks should be used once and disposed promptly after use.
- When reusable cloth masks or spit guard masks are used, thoroughly wash them with soap and water regularly and dry them before re-use. Replace them if they are worn-out.
- Observe hand hygiene after the masks are removed or changed such as washing hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based sanitisers.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions on maintenance of reusable respirators.

The food industry should also follow guidelines issued by HPB¹ or HSA² on the use, removal, maintenance and disposal of masks. More information on the different types of masks can be found on the HSA website. Product or manufacturer's instructions should also be followed.

IMPORTANT REMINDER

It is important that you ensure the following:

- Employees should not handle or prepare food if unwell.
- Employees should follow SFA's advisories with regard to food hygiene & safety (https://www.sfa.gov.sg/docs/default-source/default-document-library/advisory-to-food-establishments_final.pdf)

SINGAPORE FOOD AGENCY

¹ HPB: <https://www.healthhub.sg/live-healthy/1204/when-a-mask-is-a-must>

² HSA: <https://www.hsa.gov.sg/consumer-safety/articles/guide-to-masks-and-respirators>