

Vermont EMS Information Memorandum

TO: Vermont Emergency Providers, Service Leaders, District Medical Advisors

CC: Daniel Wolfson, MD - State EMS Medical Director

FROM: Dan Batsie, Chief of EMS, Vermont Department of Health

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Subject: Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response N-95 Respirator Reuse

Considering supply chain interruptions around personal protective equipment (PPE), it may be reasonable for emergency responders to consider extending use of or reusing N-95 respirator masks. While the decision to reuse a respirator should be based on an overall assessment of risk, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers some guidance. The following is a summary of their re-use guidance:

- The CDC recommends re-use of a respirator up to five times unless the manufacturer has more specific reuse recommendations.
- N95 respirators used during aerosol generating procedures or respirators that have been contaminated with blood, respiratory or nasal secretions, or other bodily fluids from patients should be immediately discarded and not reused.
- If a respirator is removed between uses, it should be hung in a designated storage area or kept 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.

The outside surfaces of a used N-95 respirator should be considered contaminated. Consider the following steps in the donning process to prevent cross contamination:

- Always use clean gloves when inspecting, handling, donning, and performing a user seal check on a reused respirator.
- Avoid touching the inside of the respirator.
- Prior to reusing, inspect the integrity of the respirator, checking for obvious signs of damage.
- 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.
- Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer after touching or adjusting the respirator.
- The CDC recommends using a cleanable face shield (preferred) or a surgical mask over an N95 respirator and/or other steps (e.g., masking patients, use of engineering controls), when feasible to reduce surface contamination of the re-used respirator.

The full CDC guidance on reusing respirators can be found at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/hcwcontrols/recommendedguidanceextuse.html>