GUIDANCE FOR CONSERVATION OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

With the expanding COVID-19 pandemic, the Environmental Health & Safety Department (EH&S) recommends measures to conserve personal protective equipment (PPE) while maintaining our commitment to provide a safe and healthful place for employment and learning. This aligns with current guidance from the CDC and King County.

The following PPE conservation guidance is based on existing policy from the UW Medicine enterprise. These recommendations apply only to work activities where use of PPE is required to perform a job safely. If you have questions about whether PPE is required for a specific job activity, ask your supervisor and/or refer to the EH&S Guidelines for Personal Protective Equipment.

These guidelines do not apply to clinical work. For those engaged in patient care, please refer to the UW Medical Center Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Conservation Policy. The guidelines in this document are not meant to be exhaustive, and are subject to change as the situation evolves.

PPE considered for conservation may include, but is not limited to:

- Surgical masks
- Surgical masks with faceguards
- Face shields
- Goggles
- Safety glasses
- Filtering-facepiece respirators (including N95s)
- Powered Air-Purifying Respirators (PAPR)
- Half- and full-face air-purifying cartridge respirators
- Disposable gowns or coveralls
- Disposable nitrile gloves

GENERAL GUIDANCE ON PPE CONSERVATION

1. Consider if the hazard you are using PPE for can be mitigated using engineering and/or administrative controls. Both of these controls are more effective means of protecting worker health and safety than using PPE.

2. Work with supervisors and management to minimize PPE that is purchased for non-required use (e.g., comfort, personal preference).

3. Each lab, shop or workplace should maintain control of access to all PPE supplies. This includes providing secure storage both during and after work hours.
4. Perform and maintain an inventory of all PPE items. Your leadership staff may ask for inventory information as the UW response to the pandemic changes.

5. Track consumable (disposable) PPE supplies on a regular basis, ideally daily to weekly. This data can be used to calculate a PPE use rate ("burn rate") for a lab, shop, or workplace. Such information can be provided to leadership staff for decisions on purchasing or supply reallocation.

6. Where use rate is known, consider allocating a specific allotment of PPE to a specific workspace each day. Change allotments if PPE supplies are not consumed, or if employees run out during the course of the day.

7. Where possible, do not keep PPE unsecured in public spaces or in areas that could potentially be accessed by those who don't need it. An example would be keeping supplies of gloves inside the lab where they may be used, and keeping the door closed.

8. Where individual employees are assigned their own PPE, such as a cartridge-style respirator, ensure employees are keeping them stored in a secure location.

9. Consider what disposable PPE may be safely reused where it doesn't create an additional workplace hazard. An example of this are Tyvek PAPR-hoods, which can potentially be cleaned/disinfected, inspected and used again.

10. Consider transitioning from a disposable-version of PPE (e.g., disposable face shield) to a reusable version (e.g., safety goggles). Note that reusable PPE will need to be cleaned and/or disinfected after use and between users.

11. N95 respirators are currently difficult to obtain. If a respirator is required for your work, you may be able to achieve the same level of protection with a cartridge-style respirator, or your department may have a PAPR available for use. Contact your supervisor and/or the UW Respirator Program for more information.

12. If you have PPE that is not actively in use and you do not anticipate needing it in the next 12 months, consider donating materials to the UW Medical Centers, if possible.

**PPE DECONTAMINATION**

Some groups may be considering ways to decontaminate both reusable and disposable PPE. For non-porous materials, EH&S advises using a disinfectant on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's list of Antimicrobial Products for Use Against Novel Coronavirus, and referencing the page on COVID-19 Chemical Disinfectant Safety Information.

Those looking to disinfect/reprocess N95 respirators should reach out to EH&S for assistance on process development and validation. The CDC also has recently published guidance on Decontamination and Reuse of Filtering Facepiece Respirators.

EH&S recognizes that each department or unit may have its own unique PPE challenges and conservation solutions. Please contact EH&S at ehsdept@uw.edu or call 206.543.7262 for consultation regarding PPE use and conservation.