

# MHI – Tool Box Topic

## Use of homemade masks in MHI locations during the COVID-19 pandemic

MHI employees can choose to wear a homemade mask in any of the MHI work locations but, consistent with current medical advice it is not an MHI requirement to do so. As a result, MHI will not be providing employees with homemade masks and will not reimburse the cost of procuring these masks. Any employee who chooses to wear homemade masks in any of the MHI work locations may do so keeping in mind the following:

- **Wearing a homemade mask will not prevent you from getting sick.** It is an additional measure you may take to protect others around you, particularly in situations where the recommended physical distancing cannot be maintained (such as on public transit or in grocery stores).
- Masks have limitations and in order to use a mask safely, you must do the following:
  - Wash your hands immediately before putting it on and immediately after taking it off (in addition to practicing good hand hygiene while wearing it);
  - **Mask should fit well, fully cover nose, mouth and chin area with no gaping; and,**
  - Do not share mask with others.
- Masks can become contaminated on the outside or when touched by hands.
  - Avoid moving the mask around or adjusting it often.
  - Change the mask as soon as it gets damp or soiled.
- Masks should not be placed on anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- **A homemade mask does not replace public health measures that are proven to be effective.** The best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is to continue to:
  - Stay home as much as possible;
  - Practice physical distancing;
  - Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water;
  - Cover your cough or sneezes with tissues or your sleeve; and,
  - Self-isolate when ill.
- **Homemade cloth masks should:**
  - Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face;
  - Be secured with ties or ear loops;
  - Include multiple layers of fabric;
  - Allow for breathing without restriction; and,
  - Be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape and fit.

### Sanitizing and disposing non-medical homemade masks:

- Change a cloth mask as soon as it gets damp or soiled.
  - Put it directly into the washing machine or a bag that can be emptied into the washing machine and then disposed of; and,
  - Cloth masks can be laundered with other items using a hot cycle, and then dried thoroughly.
- Homemade masks that cannot be washed should be discarded and replaced as soon as they get damp, soiled or crumpled.
  - Dispose of masks properly in a lined garbage bin; and,
  - Don't leave discarded masks in shopping carts, on the ground, etc.

**Subject to Change based on advice or direction from the Chief Medical Health Officer – April 16, 2020**