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U.S. Department of Labor Issues FAQs Regarding Use of Masks In The Workplace

The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has released a series of frequently asked questions and answers regarding the use of masks in the workplace. These FAQs & answers mark the latest guidance from OSHA addressing protective measures for workplaces during the coronavirus pandemic. This information is particularly useful now as business is reopening, yet requiring face coverings, as to what is appropriate in many settings.

The U.S. Department of Labor released 6 FAQs that are as follows:

- What are the key differences between cloth face coverings, surgical masks, and respirators?
- Are employers required to provide cloth face coverings to workers?
- Should workers wear a cloth face covering while at work, in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendation for all people to do so when in public?
- If workers wear cloth face coverings, do employers still need to ensure social distancing measures in the workplace?
- If I wear a reusable cloth face covering, how should I keep it clean?
- Are surgical masks or cloth face coverings acceptable respiratory protection in the construction industry, when respirators would be needed but are not available because of the COVID-19 pandemic?

The new guidance outlines the differences between cloth face coverings, surgical masks and respirators. It further reminds employers not to use surgical masks or cloth face coverings

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when respirators are needed. In addition, the guidance notes the need for social distancing measures, even when workers are wearing cloth face coverings, and recommends following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's guidance on washing face coverings.

OSHA previously published guidance documents for workers and employers, available at <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/>, including five guidance documents aimed at expanding the availability of respirators.

For further information and resources about the coronavirus disease, please visit OSHA's coronavirus webpage.

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