

Distribution

17 May 2020

COVID-19 RESPONSE: DEFENCE FORCES GUIDANCE ON REUSABLE BARRIER FACEMASKS

References

- A. *COVID-19 RESPONSE: DEFENCE FORCES RISK ADVISORY NOTICE ON THE COMPILATION OF OPERATIONAL RISK ASSESSMENTS*, issued by ACOS on 28 Mar 20.
- B. *COVID-19 RESPONSE: CONSOLIDATED DF GUIDANCE ON PPE, DECONTAMINATION AND CLEANING PROCEDURES*, VERSION #2, issued by ACOS on 09 Apr 20.
- C. *CURRENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE USE OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) IN THE MANAGEMENT OF SUSPECTED OR CONFIRMED COVID-19*, issued by the HSE/HSPC.
- D. *WHO ADVICE ON THE USE OF MASKS IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19*, Interim Guidance published 06 Apr 20.
- E. *GUIDANCE DOCUMENT AFNOR SPEC BARRIER MASKS*, published 27 Mar 20.
- F. *HSE ADVICE: CLOTH FACE COVERINGS, MEDICAL MASKS AND DISPOSABLE GLOVES*, updated 15 May 2020.

1. Introduction

- a. The health, safety and welfare of DF members remains the centre of gravity for all operations carried out by the DF. In line with current Government advice the DF are introducing a non-medical barrier facemask ('barrier facemask') as described in **Annex A**. Current PPE levels for activities as per Ref B will NOT change. World Health Organisation (WHO) advice on the wearing of non-medical facemasks notes that the wearing of a facemask alone assists in preventing the spread of respiratory viruses including COVID-19 by the wearer to others. The term "*my mask protects you and your mask protects me*" is commonly used to describe the rationale behind wearing non-medical facemasks or barrier masks in social environments.
- b. The wearing of a barrier facemask alone does **NOT** protect the wearer from infection by another infected individual if that individual is not wearing a facemask and is within two metres proximity. They only protect asymptomatic persons from spreading COVID-19. They do NOT protect the wearer from getting it. As per Ref B, DF personnel who do NOT present any symptoms of COVID-19 and have NOT been in close contact with an infected individual are classed as low risk.

2. **Standard Hygiene Precaution Protocols.** In all cases, the hierarchy of controls (elimination, substitution, engineering controls, administration controls and PPE) will be employed by all DF members on all activities IOT reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19. PPE is the last line of defence for exposure to this contagion. In the context of the risk of respiratory and contact infections, PPE adds an extra layer of protection to complement scrupulous attention to hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, cough etiquette and environmental hygiene. Regardless of the barrier facemask or PPE being used, DF personnel should implement meticulous standard precautions for infection prevention and control at all times.

- a. **Wash** your hands well and often to avoid contamination, using cold water and soap or an alcohol-based sanitiser for at least 20 seconds. Always wash or sanitise your hands before putting on (Donning) or taking off (Doffing) PPE, including the barrier facemask.





- b. **Cover** your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing and discard the used tissue, then clean your hands as above. Should you not have a tissue available, cough/sneeze into the crook of your elbow and if necessary then clean your hands as above.
 - c. **Avoid** touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
 - d. **Clean** and disinfect frequently-touched objects and surfaces.
 - e. **Stop** shaking hands or hugging when saying hello or greeting other people.
 - f. **Distance** yourself where possible at least 2 meters (6 feet) away from other people and especially from those who might be unwell.
3. **Risk Assessment.** Refs A and B refer. As our COVID-19 operations evolve, JTFHQ will continue to advise tasked entities accordingly on PPE Levels, taking into account the necessary SME (e.g. Medical and H&S) advice. However, **it remains the prerogative of the tasked formation/unit to decide on the specific PPE Level, based on local circumstances and risk assessments. In all circumstances if suspected cases of COVID-19 or suspected contaminated materials are present, the appropriate PPE as per the defined PPE Levels will be worn.**
4. **DF Barrier Facemask - Individual Issue**
- a. It is intended that as supplies are procured, DF personnel will be issued with three barrier facemasks with the DF logo marked on them. This will allow one to be worn as required, the second to be kept on the person in reserve and the third to be in the wash.
 - b. An instruction leaflet (**Annex A**) will be issued in the polypocket containing each DF barrier facemask. Unit Commanders will ensure that all DF personnel are briefed on the proper use, maintenance and washing of barrier facemasks as per **Annex A**. Scenario-based training (e.g. by means of a question and answer session) is advised, in accordance with **Annex B**.
 - c. On issue, barrier facemasks will be marked on the label provided with individual service numbers using wash-proof pens, to be provided by the issuing entity.
 - d. The issue barrier facemask is strictly for DF use only. Under NO circumstances should they be worn by non-DF personnel.
 - e. When not in use, the barrier facemask will be stored in the combat pocket in a plastic or zip lock bag. It should not come into contact with any other surface until it is to be washed. Hand hygiene at particular stages of donning and doffing as noted in **Annex A** should be strictly adhered to.
 - f. Where possible, an appropriate zip-lock bag should be provided to individuals on issue of the barrier facemask for storage of used barrier facemasks, as per **Annex A**.
 - g. DF personnel will wash their own barrier facemasks, as per **Annex A**.
 - h. The DF barrier facemasks will **ONLY** be worn as described in **Annex A**. Personnel wearing the barrier facemask unconventionally (e.g. around the neck or on top of the head) must be corrected immediately and informed of the dangers of contamination by improper wearing. This is a Force Protection priority and a responsibility for all DF personnel.



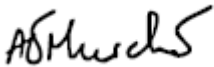
- i. As a matter of routine and due diligence, units will continue to monitor all personnel IOT ensure that NO individuals are presenting with COVID-19 symptoms.

5. **Communications.** It is imperative that formation and unit commanders communicate these guidelines to all personnel within their command. DF PR Section will post details of this instruction on the members' area of www.military.ie and IKON.

6. **Actions Pending the Issue of Barrier Facemasks.** The planned delivery date for the DF-issue barrier facemask is 01 June 20, and they will be issued ASAP thereafter. In the interim, personnel may use non-medical face coverings (e.g. a DF-issue scarf or snood, or a DF tailor-made DPM facemask) as a barrier facemask, if appropriate. If required for specific circumstances, a surgical or FFP2 facemask may be used as a substitute for the barrier facemask. Stocks of both have been issued to formations to allow for this option. However, please note that these are controlled stores - in order to prioritise our stocks of these medical facemasks for our medical personnel and for line personnel on specific taskings, surgical or FFP2 facemasks should NOT be used in circumstances where a non-medical face covering (such as a snood or tailor-made DPM facemask) would suffice. As always, decisions in this regard will be taken by formation and unit commanders, based on local circumstances and risk assessments.

7. **Operational Security.** While the barrier facemask is being worn, it may be difficult to identify DF members. At all times DF personnel controlling access and egress to DF barracks, ships, installations, guard rooms, office spaces, operational locations or any other restricted or sensitive areas must ensure that all personnel are identified prior to entry. If any doubt exists as to the identity of an individual, the individual should be asked to remove their facemask safely and temporarily to allow identification, all the while respecting social distancing.

8. **For dissemination and immediate compliance.**



Adrian Ó Murchú
Brigadier General
Assistant Chief of Staff & Defence Forces Risk Manager

List of Annexes

- A. COVID-19 Response: DF Barrier Face Mask (Specification, Storing, Washing, Donning, Doffing)
- B. COVID-19 Response: Wearing of the DF Barrier Face Mask (Scenario-Based Examples)

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COVID-19 RESPONSE: DF BARRIER FACEMASK (SPECIFICATION, STORING, WASHING, DONNING, DOFFING)



**USER MAINTAINCE LEAFLET
BARRIER FACEMASK**

Product Code: TP6102
DOD: 2914001
Description: Unisex 2Ply reusable facemask - One size
Shaped aperture panels with centre front seam
Soft elasticated ear loops

Fabric First Layer – 100% Polyester
With Water Repellent Finish & Prevents dust and irritants
Fabric Second Layer – 88% Polyester 12% Spandex
Treated with Inherent Copper Ion and Antibacterial treatment
Enhanced breathability for wearer comfort.

GARMENT CARE:

Clean barrier facemasks not in use should be stored in the combat pocket.
Used masks should be stored in a plastic or zip-lock bag / polypocket and kept in a separate combat pocket to ensure no cross contamination occurs. To be effective, the barrier facemask must be used correctly.
When laundered in accordance with the care instructions this face mask shall have a life span of 25 wash cycles.

For this, it is recommended to wear the mask on bare skin and comply with the following steps;

WASHING OF THE BARRIER FACEMASK:

1. Washing and drying of the barrier facemask will be done in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions provided.
2. Any contact between the dirty barrier facemask and clean items of clothing should be avoided. Those responsible for washing should protect themselves in order to handle dirty facemasks should they be required.
3. Wash the barrier facemask on a full wash cycle (wetting, washing, rinsing) for at least 30 minutes at a setting of 60 degrees or above.
4. Softener is not recommended for the washing of facemasks as it can deteriorate some of the constituents and potentially remove the DF logo.
5. The barrier facemask can be washed with other items of clothing once the wash cycle temperature is 60 degrees or above.
6. Drying should be initiated within two hours of the barrier facemask being cleaned. Barrier facemasks can be dried in the open air, industrial laundries and drying machines at a low heat, short pin|cycle.
7. Do not use bleach to clean your barrier facemask.

Ordnance Clothing & Equipment, Procurement Office
Ordnance Branch , DFHQ, McKee Barracks, Blackhorse Ave. Dublin 7

**DONNING/DOFFING YOUR
BARRIER FACEMASK**

Donning (Putting on) the Barrier Facemask

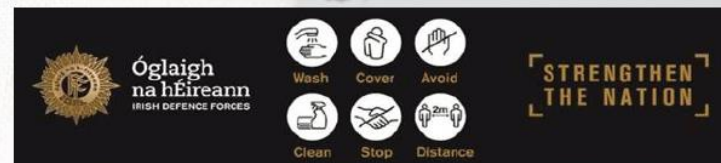
1. Wash your hands with soap and water or rub with hydroalcoholic solution before handling the mask.
2. For masks that are being reused, ensure that they have been properly washed beforehand in accordance with the recommendations detailed in this leaflet.
3. Locate the top of the mask, ensure the branded side is facing outwards.
4. Place the barrier facemask on the face, with the nose bridge on the nose.
5. Hold the barrier facemask on the outside and pass the elastic strip around both ears.
6. Pull the bottom of the barrier mask under the chin and check that it covers the chin properly.
7. Mould or pinch the nose bridge to ensure it creates a secure seam around the face.
8. Check the barrier facemask is correctly positioned. This should be done by ensuring it is adequately covering the nose, mouth and chin with no discomfort when breathing.
9. Once adjusted, avoid touching the facemask with your hands. Each time the barrier mask is touched the user must wash their hands as per the hand washing protocol.
10. If reusing a barrier facemask after a break follow all the above instructions and wash your hands with soap and water or rub with hydroalcoholic solution after putting the mask on your face.

DoFFing (Taking off) the Facemask

To mitigate contamination of other materials when removing a barrier facemask it must be correctly removed and isolated for washing.

The following recommendations should be observed;

1. If wearing protective gloves it is first necessary to remove these.
2. Wash your hands with soap and water or rub with hydroalcoholic solution before handling of the mask.
3. Remove the barrier facemask by holding the back of the elastic ear loops without touching the front part of the barrier facemask.
4. Place the barrier facemask in a clean plastic or zip lock bag for washing. This stops possible contamination spreading to other surfaces.
5. Wash your hands with soap and water or rub with hydroalcoholic solution after handling of the mask.
6. Clean the outside of the storage bag with a decontamination-cleaning product as per the DF protocol.



ANNEX B

COVID-19 RESPONSE: WEARING OF THE DF BARRIER FACEMASK (SCENARIO-BASED EXAMPLES)

Introduction. At all times the DF decontamination and cleaning protocols will be followed as a matter of ongoing priority, as per Ref B. If social distancing and hygiene protocols are adhered to, there is not always a need to wear the barrier facemask. The following is a list of common scenarios designed to assist personnel in deciding when and when not to wear the barrier facemask.

Scenario 1 (Travelling in a DF Vehicle Alone). There is no necessity to wear a barrier facemask if a member of the DF is travelling alone in a vehicle.

Scenario 2 (Traveling in a DF Vehicle With More Than One Person). Where more than one person is travelling in a DF vehicle and social distancing of more than 2 metres cannot be observed, barrier facemasks will be worn by **ALL personnel** in the vehicle. These will be donned and doffed before entering and after exiting the vehicle, as per **Annex A**.

Scenario 3 (Routine, Training and Operational DF Activities Outdoors/Indoors). Where social distancing of more than 2 metres cannot be observed safely, the barrier facemask will be worn by **ALL DF personnel** involved in that activity. The IC of the activity will ensure that all personnel are informed and supervised accordingly prior to the commencement of any activity. For example, during a tentage detail where personnel may come into proximity of less than two metres of each other, barrier facemasks will be worn by the entire work party.

Scenario 4 (Guard Room Duties). At all times the Guard Commander will ensure appropriate ventilation is present through windows / doors and local ventilation systems, where present. At all times the Guard Commander and guard staff will ensure social distancing, where reasonably practicable. If social distancing cannot be observed or if ventilation is deemed insufficient by the Guard Commander, the barrier facemask will be worn while on duty. The Guard Commander will ensure that all members of the guard have two barrier facemasks on their person before taking over duty. Where operationally viable, appropriate breaks should be provided to guard members, preferably outdoors, where the barrier facemask can be removed if necessary. Sanitation and hygiene protocols as per Ref B and Para 2 of this guidance document (*Standard Hygiene Precaution Protocols*) will be strictly adhered to at all times.

Scenario 5 (Routine Office Duties). Personnel using offices/workspaces will ensure appropriate ventilation is present through windows/doors and local ventilation systems, where present. If social distancing cannot be observed or if the occupants deem ventilation insufficient, the barrier facemask will be worn.

Scenario 6 (Flying in DF Aircraft). GOC AC will decide on the necessity and appropriateness of wearing barrier facemasks for both pilots, aircrew and passengers in line with local risk assessments and international best practice. Both H&S and Medical SMEs may be consulted in this process.

Scenario 7 (On board NS vessels). FOCNS will decide on the necessity and appropriateness of wearing barrier facemasks on board NS vessels. Again, a specific risk assessment may be necessary due to the confined spaces involved. Again, both H&S and Medical SMEs may be consulted in this process.