

## **Q&A – Places of Worship – Non-Medical Mask Initiative**

### **Q: What is the difference between non-medical and medical masks?**

A: The masks being provided are three layer non-medical face masks. When worn properly, a person wearing a non-medical mask can reduce the spread of his or her own infectious respiratory droplets. These masks are recommended when it is not feasible to maintain physical distancing (at least 2 metres of separation) between coworkers, customers and the public. They are not designed to fit tightly against the face but should be adjusted to ensure nose and mouth are fully covered. Information about non-medical mask can be found at <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/989e490e-5959-4a20-bfc7-b126b08ea996/resource/523f7856-31f5-4af1-be62-3a48a0acad4c/download/covid-19-guidance-for-wearing-non-medical-masks.pdf>

Medical masks, like N95 respirators or surgical/procedure masks, protects the wearer:

- N95 masks protect from exposure to biological aerosols that may contain viruses or bacteria. They are generally only required during specific, high-risk medical procedures that is not common outside a health care setting. They are fit-tested and designed to fit tight against the face.
- Surgical/procedure masks provide a barrier to splashes, droplets, saliva or spit. Not designed to fit tightly against the face but should be adjusted to ensure nose and mouth are fully covered

### **Q: It is hard to obtain hand sanitizer. Is the government able to help places of worship with this?**

A: Hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) is readily available through out Alberta.

### **Q: Will masks be required or recommended for places of worship?**

A: Mask use is not mandatory, but is recommend in situations it is difficult to maintain physical distancing of two meters such as when on public transit.

We know those countries that have been successful in limiting the spread of COVID-19 have had widespread use of non-medical face masks.

Albertans have slowed the spread of COVID-19 by staying home, and following public health guidance. As Alberta relaunches, there will now be more opportunity for interactions with others. One way to slow the spread is by wearing non-medical face masks when physical distancing isn't possible.

### **Q: Is there guidance about touching faces while masked?**

A: Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands. Before touching your face, wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or alcohol-based hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol. Wash or sanitize your hands:

- before putting the mask on
- before taking it off
- after taking it off
- Tighten with ties or ear loops to reduce gaps
- Keep nose, mouth and chin covered at all times
- Remove if wet, torn or dirty and dispose in a lined garbage bin
- Store cloth masks in a sealed bag until it can be washed in hot, soapy water

Also:

- Don't touch your face under the mask
- Don't touch the front of the mask – remove or adjust using the ties or ear loops
- Don't wear it under your nose or your chin
- Don't wear a wet, torn or dirty mask
- Don't wear the same mask for a long period of time – change when it becomes damp
- Don't share with another person

See <https://www.alberta.ca/masks.aspx> for more information on non-medical masks

**Q: Are there instructions on proper disposal of the masks?**

A: Remove and discard your mask if it becomes wet, torn, dirty or the ear loops/ties become damaged. Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or alcohol-based hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol before you remove the mask. Do not touch the front of the mask. Remove using the ties or ear loops. Dispose of your mask in a lined garbage bin and wash your hands again with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or alcohol-based hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol.

**Q: What are the best guidelines about making cloth masks?**

A: There are many ways to make a cloth mask. Health Canada provides instructions with sew and no-sew options - <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/sew-no-sew-instructions-non-medical-masks-face-coverings.html>

- Choose a fabric or cloth that can withstand frequent cycles through washing and drying machines.
- Use multiple layers of tight woven fabric – 4 layers is optimal.
- Use a combination of fabrics such as a high thread count cotton (e.g. 600-thread count pillowcases and cotton sheets) with spun bond polypropylene or polyester.
- Use different fabrics or colours for each side of the mask. This helps you to know which side faces your mouth and which side faces out.

**Q: Are these masks one-time use?**

A: These masks are single use only and should be properly disposed of after use. It is important to wash your hands before and after you wear your mask. Don't touch your face when you have your mask on. Only touch the mask with clean hands, and dispose of the mask properly.

**Q: You have used language like recommended and encourage. Is there a legal requirement for masks and social distancing?**

A: Wearing a mask and physical distancing is not mandatory and not a legal requirement, however it is public health measure that helps prevent the spread of COVID-19.

**Q: Indoors – is it either social distancing or masks or are both recommended?**

A: When physical distancing is not able to be maintained, non-medical masks are recommended.

**Q: If our attendees are wearing masks, do they still have to social distance?**

A: Masks are recommended when physical distancing cannot be maintained.

**Q: Where can one buy cloth masks that can be washed and reused?**

A: Many local retailers are now selling washable masks. Be aware of the manufacturing, materials, and quality of your manufacturer.

**Q: Are there smaller masks for children?**

A: The masks are one size and may not fit everyone. If you'd like to wear a mask, but these ones do not fit you or your children, consider a homemade mask. Masks are not recommended for children under 2.

**Q: Can you provide details on air circulation of our HVAC system and the risks those may cause?**

A: Guidance document will be posted here <https://www.alberta.ca/guidance-documents.aspx>

**Q: Is it safe to have singing if people are wearing masks?**

A: Congregational singing is discouraged. Consider a soloist or instrumental music instead. Gatherings that include singing – ideally soloists or small groups – should take as many of the following precautions as possible:

- Keep singers completely separate from the audience and each other by livestreaming individuals singing separately.

- Limit the number of people singing in the same place to the fewest possible.
- Have people sing facing away from others or otherwise creating separation using a barrier such as Plexiglas.
- Use pre-prepared audio or video recordings.
- Have singers wear facemasks while singing.
- If choirs, singing groups, bands, or musical ensembles affiliated with the place of worship wish to practice or perform together, they should explore alternatives to in-person singing such as virtual training or recording sessions.

**Q: Are these masks the same ones being distributed via drive-thrus?**

A: Yes, these are the same masks.

**Q: What is the shelf life of these masks?**

A: Since these masks are non-medical masks, they do not have an expiry date. Inspect the mask before you put it on. If it is dirty, ripped/torn or damaged in any way please discard.

**Q: Why has the Province chosen to exempt places of worship from the indoor gathering limits that apply to everyone else?**

A: Places of worship are an intrinsic part of many people's lives and an important social network that provide a sense of community and well-being. Non-medical masks will allow people of faith to gather while reducing the spread of COVID-19.

**Q: How will we receive the request form, and can we forward it to others?**

A: The request form will be sent to all places of worship included in the original invitation, as well as anyone who attended one of the sessions. If you know of a place a worship that has not been included, please forward the information to them, and they can submit their request for masks.

**Q: We are representing a group of places of worship. Will you be able to send to each individual or will there need to be a central distribution point?**

A: We are able to make multiple shipments. When filling out the request form, please fill out the form for each address you want the masks shipped. Alternatively, if you would like to have one shipment, you only need to fill out the form once.

**Q: For the number of attendees, should we include all our attendees throughout the province and distribution them on our own to our places of worship or should each location request them individually?**

A: We can facilitate the shipment to each location. Please ensure that the form is filled out for each location, unless you wish to have one shipment for all the places of worship that you represent.

**Q: Our mailing address is a physical location (not a PO box), but during this time there is not normally anyone there. Can we provide an alternate (i.e. residential) address for shipping?**

A: Absolutely. We will ship to whatever address is provided and include the contact number in the shipment.

**Q: We are a small community that only has PO boxes. How can we get masks?**

A: We are asking for addresses that are not PO boxes, however we understand based on the geographical size of our province, in some areas there are only PO boxes. In that case, we will accept your PO box, however we will need to use Canada Post for shipping so there may be a delay in the time it takes for you to receive masks.

**Q: We have about 1500 attendees every Sunday, how many masks should we request?**

A: Our form will ask how many people are attendees of your place of worship, so please include within this number the total number of regular attendees. We will be sending masks based on the number of requests we receive and will try and give as much consideration as possible for the number of attendees.

**Q: Since the masks are one-time use, what is the ratio you will be providing – 1 per person or a supply of multiple masks per person?**

A: The number of masks provided to each place of worship will be based on the total number of requests and consideration will be given to the number of attendees you have. We do not wish to send too many masks to a location that will not be able to use them.

**Q: In calculating how many we need, how long a period should we calculate?**

A: You can simply provide us with the number of people that attend your place of worship. We will take this number into consideration and after we receive all the requests we will try to provide each place of worship with as many as possible.

**Q: How many masks are available as part of the program for places of worship?**

A: The Government of Alberta is making a minimum of 1 million masks available for distribution to places of worship.

**Q: If this is a one-time program, what do we do afterwards?**

A: The masks are being provided to Albertans and particularly places of worship, to provide time for individuals to obtain their own mask or have time to make their own cloth mask.

Government supplied masks are not mandatory and should be viewed as an option if store bought or homemade masks are not available.

**Q: I anticipate that many people will come with personal masks already. How should we estimate the number of people that need masks as we do not want to over order by assuming 100% of our attendees need masks?**

A: We want to ensure that each place of worship receives masks so we would ask that if you have already asked your attendees to bring their own masks, consideration to this is given and you reflect the number of attendees that you expect may have not been able to obtain a mask within your request.

**Q: When will we expect to receive the masks?**

A: The request period for masks is June 12th to June 19th. Shipments will occur between June 22 and June 26th; so you should expect to receive your masks by July 1.

**Q: Is there an online form where I can request masks?**

A: The link to the online request form will be emailed to all invitees and to anyone that attended one of the masks for places of worship webex meetings. If you know someone that is not on the list and should receive the form, please forward it to them.

**Q: Is the request form only in email or can it be found online?**

A: The link to the online form will be emailed to all invitees and anyone that attended one of the masks for places of worship webex meetings. The link to the form is also available on <https://www.alberta.ca/restrictions-on-gatherings.aspx>

**Q: What would you recommend for communities that have not yet re-opening? Should we put in a request?**

A: Yes, as this is a one-time program and the request form is open from June 12th to June 19th, please submit your information and we will ship to you. You can then

make use of the masks when you choose to resume in person services or faith based activities.

**Q: Are masks only available to places of worship, or are they also available for non-profits?**

A: If the non-profit is hosting faith-based services, this program is also available to them.

**Q: Do we need to keep a record of whom we are issuing the masks to?**

A: There is no requirement to keep any records.