



City of Seattle

Mayor Jenny A. Durkan

NEWS RELEASE FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Contact: Kelsey Nyland, Kelsey.Nyland@seattle.gov

Following Countywide Face Covering Health Directive, Mayor Jenny Durkan Announces that Seattle Will Provide Over 45,000 Cloth Face Coverings to Most Vulnerable Seattle Residents

People Experiencing Homelessness, Low-Income Older Adults, and Food Distribution Services Will Receive Priority Distribution

As One of Region's Largest Employers, City of Seattle Has Face Coverings Available for Every City Employee

SEATTLE (May 11, 2020) – Following Public Health – Seattle & King County's [Local Health Directive](#), Mayor Jenny A. Durkan announced that the City of Seattle will provide over 45,000 free cloth face coverings to vulnerable communities, including people experiencing homelessness, low-income older adults, and food bank staff. As one of the region's largest employers, the City will also provide cloth face coverings for every City of Seattle employee. Effective May 18, King County residents must wear cloth face coverings in indoor public settings, on King County Metro buses, and in outdoor settings where physical distancing could be difficult, such as farmers markets. Residents must continue to practice good hygiene and continue physical distancing in addition to wearing cloth face coverings.

Members of the public do not need to buy a cloth face covering to comply with this Directive; they can easily be made with any piece of cotton fabric, including a t-shirt. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) has [step-by-step instructions](#) on how to make a cloth face covering.

As of May 10, 2020, Public Health – Seattle & King County announced a total of 7,046 cases of COVID-19 in King County residents, including 498 deaths. While Seattle and King County have made progress to flatten the curve and slow the spread of COVID-19 in our communities, residents must continue to follow public health guidance to decrease transmission in our community. The CDC recommends that in communities like Seattle and King County, where there is significant community-based transmission, all individuals cover their noses and mouths with a cloth face covering to prevent inadvertently spreading the COVID-19 virus while interacting with others outside their homes when they are unable to maintain six feet of distance.

"While we have flattened the curve, saved lives, and prevented our health care systems from being overwhelmed, we have to remember that there are significantly more cases in our community now than early March when we began restrictions. This virus knows no boundaries. Wearing cloth face coverings

is part of the new normal. While public health requirements like this are new, we must follow this guidance. It's up to all of us to protect the health and safety of our communities," said Mayor Durkan. "I'm deeply grateful to our community-based partners for their help making, procuring, and distributing face coverings to our most vulnerable communities. At this unprecedented moment, individuals and businesses should continue innovating, creating, and donating cloth face coverings."

"We all must do our part to keep others safe. If even a small chance remains that you might not be able to keep six feet between you and others, wear a mask. When you wear a mask at the store, at the farmers market, or a crowded park, you're protecting your neighbors and loved ones, you're stopping the spread of the virus, and you're contributing to our progress towards reopening the city," said Councilmember [Debora Juarez](#) (District 5, North Seattle).

"The City is stepping up and ensuring our most vulnerable residents, including our homeless neighbors and low-income seniors are able to have and use face masks in an effort to protect their health and the general population's health. As a large employer, the City is providing face coverings for all of our employees, and I encourage every employer to do the same to protect their workers when businesses begin to reopen. As we implement this policy and disseminate masks, it's critical that we ensure that access and information is equitable given communities of color across this country have experienced disproportionate enforcement for not wearing face masks in other cities. Today's announcement is sound public health policy - it is essential to protect the health of workers, the most vulnerable, and our community's health," said Councilmember [Teresa Mosqueda](#) (Position 8, Citywide).

The City's 45,500 cloth face coverings are sourced locally from businesses, including women and minority owned businesses and nonprofits. The City will distribute the masks in partnership with community-based organizations that serve immigrants and refugees, older adults, people with disabilities, and people experiencing homelessness. The City will also distribute masks to food banks and meal providers including Seattle Public Schools and Meals on Wheels, and the City will reserve a selection of masks to distribute at the City's own day and hygiene centers and shelters. The City's face coverings will be distributed as follows:

- 5,500 to affordable housing providers
- 15,000 to community-based organizations
- 5,000 to food banks
- 6,000 to meal programs
- 5,000 to older adults
- 7,500 to shelter and hygiene service providers
- 1,500 to small businesses

"We applaud the Mayor's work to provide face coverings to our vulnerable communities and to those doing important work to serve them," said Seattle Public Schools Superintendent Denise Juneau. "By providing us with a large supply of the face coverings, we'll be able to make sure that just about every link in the chain of our meal distribution is covered. We are very grateful for this gift of health and safety."

"On behalf of the Somali Family Safety Task Force, we thank the City of Seattle and Mayor Durkan for ensuring that vulnerable residents have the face coverings they need as we continue to find innovative ways to both be safe and help each other during this holy time of Ramadan," said community leader Farhiya Mohamed, also the Task Force's executive director. "These face coverings come at a crucial time, as public health data continues to show very significant racial disparities regarding the coronavirus. My message to my fellow people of color brothers and sisters is that while this virus affects everyone, it is

rapidly infecting our communities. Please, wear a face covering when leaving your home, continue to physically distance yourselves, and look out for one another."

"We like washable face coverings! The Low Income Housing Institute is one of the many frontline organizations providing shelter, housing, and hygiene services to people that are living without a home during this public health crisis. Our staff and clients need to take precautions to make sure we do our part to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Thank you to both the City of Seattle and the generous support from the community in helping make more face coverings available to service providers like us," said Sharon Lee, executive director of the Low Income Housing Institute.

While the City was able to procure over 45,000 face coverings, in addition to King County's 115,000, the community need far outweighs what local governments can provide alone. Mayor Durkan and Executive Constantine call on interested and able members of the public to donate cloth face coverings to help vulnerable communities stay safe and healthy. Cloth face coverings can be donated through [United Way's Donation Portal](#), [King County Donation Connector](#), and [Washington Mask Challenge](#).

In addition, businesses and large organizations interested in buying bulk face coverings locally are encouraged to fill out this City of Seattle [survey](#) to find out how your organization can source cloth face coverings for your employees.

As one of the region's largest employers, the City of Seattle has face coverings available for every single City employee. The Mayor calls on all other large employers to provide cloth face coverings and appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) if they are not already. In addition, the [Governor's "Safe Start" plan](#) requires that all employers provide whatever PPE is necessary to conduct business.

Members of the public with questions about the new countywide face covering directive should visit [kingcounty.gov/masks](#). Please note that N95 masks or other medical-grade masks should not be purchased to comply with this directive; those materials must be reserved for health care workers and first responders on the frontlines. To donate N95 masks or other PPE, [please fill out this survey](#) or email the City of Seattle at PPEdonations@seattle.gov.

In addition, it is critical to note that there are valid reasons why some people can't wear face coverings – please do not discriminate. If you experience or witness harassment or an act of bias, report it to the Seattle Office for Civil Rights Anti-Bias hotline at 206-233-7100. You can also report online at [seattle.gov/reportbias](#). If it is an emergency, please call 9-1-1 immediately.

While Seattle and King County have had initial success in preventing the further spread of COVID-19, physical distancing and good hygiene remain critical. As the weather warms up, all Seattle residents are encouraged to continue to #KeepItMoving in public spaces, including parks, farmers markets, and greenways. For updated parks guidance and hours, visit <http://www.seattle.gov/parks>.

The City has also created [a comprehensive resource page](#) for residents and small businesses impacted by COVID-19. This page will be updated as more information becomes available.

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