

CHEM -SOP- 04	Revision #: 02	Implementation Date: June-2020	Last Reviewed/ Update: December 10 th -2020	Page #: 1 of 4
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PROPER USE OF NON-MEDICAL FLAME-RESISTANT FACE MASKS

Due to recent regulatory changes (O Reg 654/20), the University requires that a non-medical mask or face covering be worn in all indoor University spaces (including University-owned and leased spaces), whether restricted-access or open to the public, including all labs and research spaces. All individuals (employees and non-employees) in a lab must wear masks. Given the diversity of lab personnel and researchers, and the importance of applying a consistent approach across our research areas, the university requires everyone conducting research in labs to wear masks even when physical distancing measures can be applied. Note: Masks do not replace the need for two-metre physical distancing, hand washing, and staying home when sick.

For more information, please refer to the [Joint Provostial and Human Resources Guideline](#) on Non-medical masks and the [General Workplace Guidelines GWG \(Ch 6\)](#)

When working in a Chemistry Lab where flammable, pyrophoric materials are handled, **ONLY flame-resistant masks are allowed**. These masks are considered a lab PPE. As such, they must be removed and replaced for regular cloth face masks when leaving the labs (as done with gloves, lab coats, and any other lab-PPE).

The Department of Chemistry has secured the provision of reusable **flame-resistant** cloth face masks for St. George patrons working. These masks are made from Westex Ultrasoft® Flame-Resistant fabric and will be made available through Chem Stores.

IMPORTANT: disposable surgical masks are not allowed in Chemistry Laboratories as they have not been tested or rated to the flame-resistant standards required when handling flammable and pyrophoric materials.

IMPORTANT: Please note that these masks are non-medical masks. **Non-medical face masks must not be used instead of medical-grade masks** (e.g. N95 or surgical masks) where required by EHS to conduct research.

- If you require an air-purifying respirator, or an N95 you must be fit tested with the specific make, model, style, and size of respirator you will be using. [Contact EHS to book an appointment.](#)

1. **Purpose:** to provide step by step guidance on how to wear and wash reusable flame-resistant cloth face masks when handling and using flammable materials to help prevent the community spread and risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2.

2. **Scope:** applies to all faculty, staff and students within the Department of Chemistry who are working on-site with flammable materials

3. **Prerequisites:** understanding of physical distancing and COVID-19 transmission prevention guidance and best practices, as provided by Health Canada, Public Health Ontario, and Toronto Public Health. WHMIS.

4. **Responsibilities:** It is the responsibility of Principal Investigators and Managers to facilitate the implementation of this SOP and lab personnel are responsible to comply. Everybody plays an important role in reducing the community spread of COVID-19 and risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2.

5.

<i>Personal Protective Equipment</i> <i>The following shall be worn when physical distancing cannot be maintained during the handling and use of flammable materials</i>	
Flame-Resistant Face Mask 	Flame-Resistant Lab Coat 

6. Procedure

1. The Department of Chemistry has secured stocks of flame-resistant face masks.
 - i. Supervisors are responsible to ensure lab personnel is provided with flame-resistant face masks as appropriated and in accordance to U of T policy .
 - ii. The face mask is a unisex one-size-fits-all design with adjustable ties to customize the fit.
 - iii. The face mask should be laundered before use. Laundering instructions can be found below on Page 4.
 - iv. PIs and Managers are encouraged to purchase 2 masks per each personnel to have available during cleaning/laundrying.
2. Flame-resistant face masks should be worn when doing research in a chemistry lab where flammable materials are handled. **Non-flame-resistant face masks (like regular cloth masks or disposable surgical masks) should never be worn when working with flammable materials.**
3. When donning the flame-resistant face mask, it should:
 - i. Allow for easy breathing.
 - ii. Fit securely to the head with the provided ties.
 - iii. Be changed as soon as possible if damp or dirty.
 - iv. Be comfortable and not require frequent adjustment.
 - v. Be large enough to completely and comfortably cover the nose and mouth without gaping.
4. The flame-resistant face mask should not:
 - i. Be shared with others.
 - ii. Impair the vision or interfere with tasks.
 - iii. Be secured with tape or other inappropriate materials.
 - iv. Be placed on anyone unable to remove them without assistance or anyone who has trouble breathing.

How to Don Flame-Resistant Cloth Face Mask:

1. Ensure the face mask is clean and dry.
2. Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before touching the mask.
 - If unavailable, use hand sanitizer with a minimum 60% alcohol base.
3. Ensure your hair is away from your face.
4. Place the face mask over your nose and mouth, and secure to your head with the ties.
 - Adjust if needed to ensure nose and mouth are fully covered.
 - The mask should fit snugly to the cheeks and there should not be any gaps.
5. Repeat Step 2.

While wearing a non-medical face mask, it is important to avoid touching your face. If you do touch your mask or face, you should immediately wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds. You can also use hand sanitizer with a minimum 60% alcohol base.

How to Doff Flame-Resistant Cloth Face Mask:

1. **Remove your gloves and wash your hands** with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds **before touching the mask.**
 - If unavailable, use hand sanitizer with a minimum 60% alcohol base.
2. Remove the face mask by un-tying it.
 - Avoid touching the front of the mask when removing it.
 - The mask can be placed in a plastic bag temporarily if you are not at home.
 - Make sure you close or zip seal the bag while storing it.
3. After removing the face mask, repeat Step 1.

Cleaning of Flame-Resistant Cloth Face Mask:

Change your flame-resistant face mask as soon as it becomes damp or soiled. If you plan to re-use your face mask, wash it before wearing it again, by following the instructions below:

1. Machine wash in warm water up to 165°F (74°C) and with one of the acceptable consumer detergents:
 - i. All
 - ii. Arm & Hammer
 - iii. Cheer
 - iv. Era
 - v. Gain
 - vi. Purex (powder and tablets)
 - vii. Select Ultra
 - viii. Surf
 - ix. Tide, Tide w/ Bleach Alternative (powder, liquid & tablets)
 - x. Wisk
 - xi. Xtra

Avoid the use of softeners, starch, chlorine bleach, hydrogen peroxide bleach, and soaps (salts or fatty acids).

2. Once washed, hang dry the face mask inside-out. **DO NOT IRON.**
3. The Westex Ultrasoft® Flame-Resistant fabric can retain its flame resistance after 100 washings, while shrinking less than 7%.² **After 100 washes, it is recommended to purchase a new flame-resistant face mask.**

References:

1. Government of Canada. (2020). Non-Medical Masks and Face Coverings: About. Retrieved 06/22/2020 from <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/about-non-medical-masks-face-coverings.html>
2. Westex. (2020) Westex UltraSoft®. Retrieved 06/22/2020 from <https://www.westex.com/fr-fabric-brands/ultrasoft/>