

TYPES NOT MAPPED YET June 17, 2020 | TTR not mapped yet | Amy E. Oslica Dougherty

# OSHA issues new guidance on face coverings in light of COVID-19

As businesses adjust in response to COVID-19 and, in some cases, reopen after a temporary closure, issues may arise related to face covering requirements. Recently, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued [guidance regarding masks](#) to help businesses and their employees understand how to properly use masks in the workplace to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

In its guidance, OSHA recommends that employers encourage their workers to wear face coverings at work, in compliance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations. However, OSHA notes that, in some instances, cloth face coverings may, in fact, be a hazard. OSHA includes examples such as a cloth face covering becoming contaminated with chemicals used in the work environment, causing workers to inhale chemicals that collect on the face covering. In those instances, OSHA recommends that employers provide other personal protective equipment (PPE), like a face shield or surgical mask, rather than a cloth face covering.

The OSHA guidance also emphasizes that cloth face coverings are not a substitute for respirators or other OSHA-required PPE, nor do they replace proper social distancing measures in the workplace.

OSHA also refers to the CDC's guidance on washing face coverings. In short, cloth face coverings can be washed in a washing machine with regular laundry, preferably with warm or hot water.

The proper use of face coverings is just one of many OSHA-related (and non-OSHA) questions employers may have in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thompson Coburn maintains a [COVID-19 resource page](#) filled with valuable information about pandemic legal issues, ranging from tips for managing your offices and employees to detailed background about the CARES Act and other pandemic-specific laws.

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