

Conservation Measures for PPE Drawn from State Cache

In order to ensure availability of PPE throughout the course of an influenza pandemic, it may be necessary to adopt PPE conservation measures. This document outlines policies which will be implemented at the discretion of the NDDoH Department Operation Center. For the purposes of this policy, PPE refers to N95 or N100 respirators, gowns and gloves. The goal of the policy is to prevent transmission of any pathological agent from patient to staff or from staff to patient.

Application of this policy: This policy applies to all institutions drawing resources from the state cache during an influenza pandemic. Usage rates of material by institution will be monitored to ensure all institutions using material use at a rate consistent with the number of pandemic patients for which the institution is caring. It is recommended that each institution assign one or more persons responsible for tightly controlling access to PPE.

Respirators (N95, N100) – All response workers who will be in direct contact with persons with the disease, such that they need to wear the respirator continuously, should be issued at least two respirators which they would mark for their personal use. (Persons with intermittent need to wear a respirator should be issued a single respirator if it can dry between uses.) During a 12 hour shift, the response worker wearing a respirator continuously should change it every four hours. Respirators not in use should be placed where they can dry. A facility may adopt a policy for using a surgical mask over an N95 to help keep it clean; however, this will not be a requirement of the conservation policy initially. When a respirator becomes visibly soiled with body fluids, torn or misshapen, it should be brought to the designated supply officer for replacement. Employees should turn in the old respirator for disposal to ensure that contaminated respirators are not accumulated. Respirators which have been used one or more times for patient care should be donned and doffed or otherwise handled wearing gloves.¹

Gowns - Gowns used for direct patient care of persons with influenza may be worn during the care of multiple patients until soiled. For care of a pandemic patient also under contact isolation due to the presence of an additional organism, the worker should change into a gown specifically used for that patient. Gowns assigned for care of a specific patient do not have to be employee specific. An institution may lengthen the life of Tyvex gowns by having employees wear a washable gown (e.g., patient gown) over the Tyvex gown to delay soilage, but this will not be a requirement of the conservation policy initially.

Gloves – Initially no conservation measures will be used for non-sterile gloves due to the increased risk of transferring bacterial pathogens between patients. If usage rates suggest

¹ A limitation of respirators is the straps securing the respirator around the face. The straps are thin and appear to tolerate relatively little repetitive stretching – perhaps 6 or 8 times. This may be sufficient conservation given the numbers that NDDoH has stockpiled. It is not unreasonable to consider replacing in a situation in which PPE supply was critical, but that would be an alternation with undocumented impact on effectiveness.

that supplies will not be sufficient to cover the pandemic, conservation measures may be necessary and would be issued by the state when necessary. This would likely be tighter guidelines for use and restricted distribution rather than re-use. No change is anticipated in the use of sterile gloves.