

Use of Surgical Masks during the H1N1 Pandemic

You have requested a surgical mask as a measure of protection during the current influenza pandemic. The Postal Service will provide surgical masks when available.

Use of a mask is only part of what you should do to avoid influenza. Frequent hand washing and avoiding close contact with other persons at work and at home are equally or more important in avoiding disease.

OSHA recommends the use of surgical masks in a pandemic situation for employees at "medium risk," which means employees such as window clerks and carriers who routinely have frequent contact with customers and others. While any employee who asks for a mask will be provided one, if available, please consider whether you are in the "medium-risk" category. If not, consider following the other measures for your protection and conserving the limited stock of masks.

To maximize protection, please take care of the mask:

- Handle the mask only by the straps when putting it on or taking it off.
- Avoid contact with the outer surface.
- If the mask becomes dirty, torn, or wet, or if you have been in close contact with a person thought to have an influenza-like illness (coughing, fever), discard the mask. Remove it by the straps and deposit it in the nearest trash bin.

If the mask causes irritation or any other discomfort (such as difficulty breathing) take it off and notify your supervisor.