



COVID-19 ACTION CARD

Guidance On Requiring Staff To Maintain Facial Hair To Ensure Appropriate Fit of FFP3 Masks

Guidance

In order to be effective, FFP3 type face masks have to form a seal to the face. Face masks can often be used incorrectly which is why fitting/fit testing is required to ensure they are effective in affording appropriate protection.

Beards, stubble and facial hair cause a common problem when using FFP3 face masks, as this can prevent the mask being able to seal to the face and passing the fit test, therefore rendering the mask ineffective against contaminants. There is significant evidence that protection is significantly reduced where facial hair is present, although it is possible to pass a fit test with limited facial hair (i.e. moustache and goatee). In order to achieve the best levels of protection, the manufacturer states individuals must be clean shaven in the area of the seal before they begin their shift or take a face fit test.

The most reliable way to ensure a correct mask fit, and therefore appropriate protection, is for an employee to be clean shaven.

Managers should engage with staff to ensure that they understand their responsibility and obligation under the Health and Safety legislation to maintain their facial hair at the level that facilitated the initial fit test pass.

General Principles

- In the first instance, management should explain that to be fit tested an individual must be clean shaven in the area of seal, and that if they have previously passed a fit test for a FFP3 mask with a moustache and/or goatee, they should maintain the level of facial hair that facilitated that 'pass'.



- That maintaining the good quality fit of FFP3 masks is an important part of maintaining their own health and safety and that this is particularly important in a pandemic.
- Any concerns employees have should be discussed with their manager, getting further support from Health and Safety Team, if required to fully understand any concerns and personal circumstances that may need to be considered.

If for any reason an individual is not clean shaven alternative PPE will be provided for these individuals, but staff must highlight this to their manager in good time before a shift that may require alternative PPE.

Staff who wish to grow facial hair who have previously passed a fit test should request an RPE Hood to use for that shift and discuss the future arrangements if they intend to keep the facial hair.



Actions for Line manager

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| Identify staff members within your department / directorate who have passed a fit test. | |
| Discuss with the staff member the options of masks and benefit of shaving for maintaining appropriate mask fit. | |
| Explain the risk to the staff member if they do not maintain the same level of facial hair as during a successful fit testing. | |
| Discuss with the staff member if there are any health or cultural issues that is preventing them from being clean shaven. | |
| Explain the duty of staff to take care of their own health and that of others and their responsibilities under health and safety legislation | |

Actions for staff member

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| Notify your line manager if you are unable to maintain the same level of facial hair as the time of your fit test prior to start of shift. | |
| If there are health/cultural issues that is preventing you from being clean shaven, then inform your line manager and request to be issued a hood before, commencing your shift. | |
| Notify your line manager if you require a respirator hood due to failing fit testing at the start of a shift. | |



If an employee has passed a fit test for an FFP 3 mask, it is their responsibility to maintain a clean-shaven state where the mask seals to the face. If a member of staff reports for duty without having maintained a clean-shaven area for the seal of their mask, then they must inform their manager and request an RPE hood. Failure to do so could be detrimental to the health and safety of the staff member and could result in a disciplinary action.

This EEAST guidance is based on national guidance, which due to the nature of the pandemic changes regularly. As such this guidance will be reviewed and changed as the situation evolves.

Please check Need to Know for the most recent version

Please see the below link on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) for further information.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/respiratory-protective-equipment/fit-testing-basics.htm>

