

HSE safety alert issued against KN95 facemask

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is warning against the use of KN95 facemasks as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

A safety alert has been issued today, Thursday 11 June 2020, urging all employers and suppliers not to purchase or use KN95 facemasks as PPE.

KN95 is a performance rating that is broadly equivalent to the EU standard for FFP2 facemasks. Products manufactured to KN95 requirements rely on a self-declaration of compliance by the manufacturer. There is no independent certification or assurance of their quality.

This respirator has been identified as suspect by HSE experts and locally arranged testing has confirmed they would not meet requirements, including to protect against the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. About 90% of the PPE concerns and queries currently being received by HSE involve KN95 masks which are often accompanied by fake or fraudulent paperwork.

HSE has quarantined around 1.5 million KN95 masks, prevented 25 million items claiming to be FFP3 respirators entering the supply chain and prevented a further four lines consisting of many millions of items entering the supply chain.

Rick Brunt, HSE's director of operational strategy said: "The KN95 facemask should not be purchased or used."

"KN95 has not been a principal source of PPE for the NHS, who has already made the decision not to supply this respirator to frontline clinicians fighting the coronavirus pandemic."

"We have found that the lack of independent testing has contributed to there being a substantial quantity of inadequate and poor-quality masks on the market, claiming to comply with the KN95 standard."

"We understand a lot of people, mainly in sectors outside of healthcare, have bought these facemasks without realising they are non-compliant. We are concerned that people wearing them are not being protected from breathing in harmful substances in the way they expect. Protective equipment must protect."

Domestic, European and international organisations continue to raise concerns regarding KN95 masks, including details of counterfeit and illegal products. HSE is working to remove them from the supply chain with colleagues in the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS), Border Force, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and Trading Standards to identify manufacturers and suppliers of these masks and prevent them entering the UK.

The safety alert does not relate to N95 masks which are manufactured to a US Standard and have been given permission for use specifically in UK healthcare settings.

A copy of the alert can be found [here](#).

About HSE

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. www.hse.gov.uk

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