



Ned Lamont  
Governor

# STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

Office of the Commissioner



Rollin Cook  
Commissioner

TO: All DOC Staff

FROM: Rollin Cook, Commissioner

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rollin Cook".

DATE: April 14, 2020

SUBJ: **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

The topic of personal protective equipment (PPE) is always a priority for a correctional agency, but never has this topic held greater importance than it does now.

To be totally candid, I am frustrated by the fact that our Agency does not have the full inventory of PPEs that it should. Even more disheartening is the thought that some have suggested that I do not care whether or not staff have the protective equipment they need. As someone who is essentially a correctional officer at heart, nothing could be further from the truth.

In the interest of complete transparency, and to show you the efforts the Department has made to procure ample numbers of PPE's for all staff, I am going to share with all of you the agency request for PPEs dating back to the beginning of March. Furthermore, I am also sharing with you the current number of N95 masks available to each facility (see attachments).

I want you to know, without a doubt, that we entered this crisis with a strong plan of action which included purchasing the critical supplies needed to keep our staff safe. What we could not have anticipated was the worldwide shortage of these items. Despite the lack of readily available inventory, I vow to continue fighting to procure these items for you, our first responders, the unsung heroes of this pandemic.

I want nothing more than to outfit every single Department of Correction employee with the highest level of protection provided by the N95 mask. The reality is, at this time I cannot.

Issuing each employee an N95 mask for routine duties will result in an absolute depletion of supplies in just days at a time when the state is preparing for the peak of the epidemic, accompanied by a surge of hospitalizations. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Department of Public Health (DPH) have been our official source of guidance during our planning phases – that evolving guidance now recommends extending the life of all PPE during a shortage. To aid in preserving the precious resources we do have, in addition to the N95 masks, surgical mask and level three cloth masks made internally at our industry shops, I have authorized all of our employees the ability to wear their own personal masks from home. In terms of distribution, all employees were issued a surgical mask for use this week.

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Despite the difficulties in obtaining PPEs, I want you to know I will continue to fight to get the equipment our staff needs and deserves. I have a moral and ethical obligation to protect our employees and the offender population under our care, and that is exactly what I intend to do.

I am also certain that you will continue to adapt to whatever challenges the next few weeks will bring. Adapting to daily challenges, persevering in the face of adversity, and overcoming obstacles is what correctional professionals do – it is at the core of who we are.

We will get through this together – added emphasis on the word “together.” Thank you for your unwavering commitment to this agency and to serving the citizens of Connecticut.