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## OPERATIONAL BULLETIN

Bulletin #	Title		Date Issued
#2020-08-21-01	Use of N95, or Equivalent, Masks with Exhalation Valves		August 21, 2020
Superseded	Released By:	Source:	Page(s)
N/A	Maine EMS	Maine EMS, Maine CDC, U.S. CDC	2
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It has come to the attention of Maine EMS that there are several services throughout the state that are utilizing masks that have exhalation valves or ports (e.g. ENVO masks). While the masks offer the wearer protection from hazards (e.g. COVID-19, TB, etc.) up to the approved rating, they do not provide any source control. In other words, it does not offer any protection to the patient who is receiving care from the clinician wearing the mask.

We understand that organizations throughout the state have made significant investments in procuring ENVO masks. The ideal standard would be use of a traditional N95 mask; however, the U.S. CDC has released the following guidance regarding use of masks with exhalation valves:

“Respirators with exhalation valves protect the wearer from SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, but may not prevent the virus spreading from the wearer to others (that is, they may not be effective for source control). Until data are available to describe how effective respirators with exhalation valves are in preventing the spread of SARS-CoV-2 from the wearer to others:

- Wear a respirator **without** an exhalation valve when both source control and respiratory protection are required.
- If only a respirator with an exhalation valve is available and source control is needed, cover the exhalation valve with a surgical mask, procedure mask, or a cloth face covering that does not interfere with the respirator fit.” (U.S. CDC, Aug. 8, 2020)

There are isolated reports that agencies have attempted to cover the exhalation ports with tape, this would be considered altering the device and violates the manufacturer’s recommendation regarding altering the device by blocking the port.

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Maine CDC has reviewed the port covers that are currently being marketed by ENVO mask; however, at this time they are not recommended as an alternative to utilizing surgical masks over top of the ENVO masks. The port covers are designed to filter large debris from the environment from obstructing the port but does not offer sufficient source control to protect those receiving care from the wearer.

Please note that surgical masks should be placed over top of the ENVO masks. Wearing the surgical mask underneath the ENVO mask likely will compromise the seal of the mask limiting its function as an N95 respirator.

Source: U.S CDC. PPE FAQ. (August 8, 2020). Accessed on August 21, 2020 from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/respirator-use-faq.html>