

To: Heads of Department/Section, Executive Deans,
HSLOs and DHSOs, Faculty Managers

**For
Information/Action**

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Safety Alert

According to the latest Health and Safety Executive (HSE) safety alert, respirators/masks which rely on ear loops do not provide protection as tight fitting Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE). As a result, the HSE does not recommend using ear loop masks/respirators as tight fitting RPE at work in Great Britain. This also included when using clips, 'snugger' or other means of tightening ear loops.



This safety alert advises duty holders, who have these items available in their workplaces, to revisit their Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (as amended) risk assessment and consider their RPE provision to ensure it is adequate and suitable for the user and the activity to be undertaken.



For most of the workers who are required to wear tight fitting RPE in the workplace, this seal with the face cannot be achieved with a respirator/mask relying on ear loops to hold it in place. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that respirators/masks which use ear loops, regardless of whether they have a CE or UKCA marks present, provide the wearer with the right protection.

Face fit test

To provide adequate protection for individual wearers, all tight-fitting RPE should be fit tested by a competent assessor as part of the selection process.

Action required

Duty holders are asked to ensure that they are not using any of these ear loop respirators within processes where respiratory protection is required under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002.



For action by staff members

Staff members should use the masks provided by the University which are in line with the HSE safety alert.

Surgical masks and other face coverings are not affected

Do not confuse FFP2 masks/respirators with masks or fluid resistance surgical masks (FRSM), shown below, as FRSM's are used for a different purpose and are not required to be tight fitting.

Further guidance

- [RPE fit testing](#)
- [Selecting and managing the use of RPE](#)
- [RPE at work. A practical guide](#)

