

Dear School Staff,

As a Cabot resident and the former evidence-based health educator at Cabot School (2008 – 2015), I would like to make you aware of the worker protections in place for employees required to wear respiratory (breathing) protection devices. As school staff, you are being asked to supervise the use of masks by youth and co-workers, and following is advice provided by OSHA and the CDC:

According to the Occupational and Safety Administration ([OSHA](#)) supervisor's manual, any device which restricts breathing by covering the mouth and nose, such as a ½ face dust mask or an N-95, can cause serious health concerns.

For example, a covering will inhibit the flow of oxygen, and the OSHA manual lists the following symptoms supervisors should be watching for:

EFFECTS OF OXYGEN DEFICIENCY

- **Increased breathing volume**
- **Accelerated heartbeat**
- **Impaired attention and thinking**
- **Impaired Coordination**
- **Rapid Fatigue that may cause permanent heart damage**
- **Intermittent respiration (a.k.a. *IRREGULAR BREATHING*)**

FYI: Normal Sao₂ (the amount of oxygen in the blood) is NOT an indicator of oxygen deficiency.

According to the [CDC's NIOSH website](#) for worker health and safety, the following are symptoms that a wearer is having difficulty expelling carbon dioxide:

EFFECTS OF INCREASED CONCENTRATIONS OF CARBON DIOXIDE

- **Headache**
- **Increased pressure inside the skull**
- **Increased “work of breathing”, which is result of breathing through a filter medium**
- **Cardiovascular effects (e.g., diminished cardiac contractility, vasodilation of peripheral blood vessels)**
- **Reduced tolerance to lighter workloads [a.k.a. *FATIGUE*]**

According to these official government sources, people with pre-existing physical or psychological conditions are at a greater risk of complications when wearing a respiratory protection device. After a medical screening, proper supervision of mask use must be provided, which includes immediately addressing and remedying any of the symptoms listed above.

The cloth and paper masks used currently in community settings are temporarily approved under the FDA for emergency use, and are not approved for medical use. Cloth and paper masks **do not work as PPE**, and therefore protections provided for other types of masks, such as in health care or construction, are not being applied to their use in community settings. However, the associated health risks are still a serious consideration, as demonstrated in the research summarized in the attachments below.

Please find attached a letter I wrote to the Agency of Education (AOE) outlining my concerns, a slideshow reviewing the evidence related to mask use by youth, and the [**Vermont Mask Survey Final Report**](#) which describes the results of my research about the known effects. Let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely Your Neighbor,
Amy Hornblas