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**Governor Ige and Hawai'i Department of Health provide additional guidance on face masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19**

HONOLULU – Based on national guidance released today from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and recommendations from county mayors and state legislators, Gov. Ige and the Hawai'i Department of Health and the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency are formulating a statewide policy on the voluntary use of facemasks.

Although there is no current data to demonstrate that homemade, cloth masks are effective for individual protection, it is reasonable to assume that wearing a fabric mask can help prevent the spread of infection to others. The CDC now recommends wearing a cloth face covering in public settings particularly where other physical distancing measures are difficult to maintain such as grocery stores, pharmacies, and takeout food establishments.

“Many of us may be walking around unaware that we may be carrying coronavirus, and when we cough, sneeze, and to a lesser degree, even speak, cloth masks can block infectious droplets and prevent the virus from spreading,” said Health Director Bruce Anderson.

“Protection of others is maximized when facemasks are used. However, it is important to avoid touching your face when wearing and adjusting a mask. Remember, my facemask protects you and your facemask protects me.”

CDC guidance emphasizes that maintaining 6-foot physical distancing remains important for slowing the spread of the virus. Masks are primarily considered an infection source control measure, designed to keep sick people from spreading their germs. Masks complement other physical distancing measures, which are the most effective means of containing community spread. Masks are not a substitute for stay-at-home orders and are less effective than frequent handwashing, avoiding touching your face, and simply staying away from people who are ill.

The cloth face coverings recommended are not surgical masks or N-95 masks. Those are critical supplies that need to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders.

“There is no need to wear a cloth mask when you’re outdoors and not in close proximity to anyone else,” Anderson concluded. “Being outside in fresh air is good for us, and there is no risk of being infected as long as you’re not around other people. So, we encourage people to walk, run, and surf...as long as you practice good physical distancing. Don’t hesitate to remind others to do the same.”

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