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To: ALL MEMBERS

Dear Brother / Sister

OFFICIAL GUIDANCE: WHEN TO USE A SURGICAL FACE MASK OR FFP3 RESPIRATOR

Public Health England (PHE) published guidance in poster format ***When to use a surgical face mask or FFP3 respirator***. Members may wish to review the guidance to ensure that you are aware of the current advice. This circular does not contain a narrative to reflect the information in the graphic but draws members' attention to the fact that it has been issued. The advice is extracted from the following webpage:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874411/When_to_use_face_mask_or_FFP3.pdf

The guidance is produced for health staff but there is read across for other first responders such as firefighters who may come across potential Covid-19 sufferers when responding to fire calls. The key factors are:

- The PPE to be worn
- The importance of having respiratory protection when using aerosol generating procedures (AGPs). In the fire service an example of this would be incident-ground oxygen therapy equipment. As other PHE guidance explains, AGPs can, or rather, are likely to produce airborne droplets which will carry the virus. For these reasons eye protection should also be worn when AGPs are used on a casualty by firefighters. The most logical step for firefighters, who have access to it as a matter of course, is for breathing apparatus to be worn as this provides complete protection to our eyes, airways, and face.

Whilst the approaches by governments to certain aspects of how they are responding to Covid-19 varies slightly, the advice provided to the public differs in style rather than content.

Fire and rescue services will have issued information to personnel, however with the fast-moving nature of the current crisis, the volume of information being published, and the changes to the way that fire and rescue services are having to operate due to the guidance issued by the governments in the UK, there is a likelihood of such information not being updated as quickly as any of us would have liked.

We hope this will be of assistance to members.

Best wishes.

Yours fraternally

ANDY DARK
Assistant General Secretary

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