

Gov. Evers: Wisconsin receives delivery of 230,000 N95 masks from FEMA, new Battelle Critical Care Decontamination System coming online in Wisconsin mid-May

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MADISON – Gov. Tony Evers today announced Wisconsin has received a delivery of 230,000 N95 respirator masks from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), providing a needed boost to efforts to obtain personal protective equipment (PPE) for distribution in the state. FEMA has also informed the state that it will be receiving technology in the form of a Battelle Critical Care Decontamination System™ (CCDS) to help decontaminate N95 respirator masks, which will help extend the life of these important supplies.

“I would like to thank FEMA for answering our calls for help with obtaining these critical supplies, which are badly needed by folks working on the frontlines of the fight against COVID-19,” Gov. Evers said. “Staff at the State Emergency Operations Center has been working tirelessly to acquire PPE, and these masks will be a welcome addition to the supply chain they have worked to establish. However, it only addresses a small portion of the ongoing need in Wisconsin for reliable access to PPE.”

The delivery of masks follows a request the state made to FEMA last month for assistance with purchasing PPE to help supply workers responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. The masks will be used to support state operations and be distributed to county and tribal emergency managers, who will allocate them to local direct care providers and first responders based on a review of their current needs.

“These additional supplies will be distributed to our partners on the local level as quickly as possible,” said Dr. Darrell L. Williams, Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) administrator. “However, it is important to remember these resources are still extremely scarce, so we encourage all critical care providers who need N95 masks to take steps to extend their life when possible.”

Through a contract with Battelle, a nonprofit research firm, FEMA has also informed the state that it plans to deploy technology in Wisconsin currently being used in other states to address shortages of critical PPE resources by decontaminating many types of N95 masks. Medical personnel across the state will be able to send their masks to Madison for processing and, once cleaned and sterilized, they will be sent back to the original user.

The Battelle CCDS™ decontaminates masks by killing viruses and bacteria using hydrogen peroxide gas. Battelle advises masks can be decontaminated up to 20 times without degrading filtration performance. The system will be able to decontaminate tens of thousands of N95 masks on a daily basis.

“This innovative solution will help dramatically extend the life of N95 masks and address the concerns many health care workers have expressed about the safety of reusing masks,” said Gov. Evers. “This is a critical component of my Badger Bounce Back plan and a key part of getting our state in a position to continue to gain momentum.”

FEMA expects the Battelle CCDS™ to arrive in Wisconsin in the early part of May, with the system likely to be ready for use later in the month. In anticipation of Battelle beginning operations in the state, healthcare workers and first responders are being asked to begin saving their used N95 masks for possible future decontamination. Details about how providers can access this service will be communicated ahead of the system’s launch.

Please note:

- The Battelle Decontamination System is not authorized for use with respirators containing cellulose-based materials.
- All compatible N95 respirators must be free of any visual soiling or contamination (e.g., blood, bodily fluids, makeup).
- Compatible N95 respirators that are visually soiled or damaged should not be collected for decontamination and will be disposed of and not returned after

decontamination.

- Masks should be marked with the name of the healthcare professional to whom the mask was issued.

More information on the Battelle CCDS™ is available [here](#).

In addition to the Battelle System, UV decontamination sites are already in place in much of Wisconsin, and with capacity to service N95 masks and other types of PPE, such as face shields, gowns, and aprons. These efforts are highlighted by facilities currently operating in Brown, Dane, Kenosha, and Sawyer counties.