# Covid-19: Putting Respiratory Protective Equipment and its use Under the Spotlight

The SARS-COV-2/COVID-19 pandemic brought with it a global focus on respiratory protection. This poster outlines the changes that have occurred for respiratory protection in Europe, and what these changes could mean for the future.

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## The "Problem"

Global respirator supply shortage. →

Blockage of free trade of respirators between certain nations. →

Efforts to reuse single use respirators (FFP).

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New suppliers of respirators, helped by a simplified procedure for the emergency authorization of products in the EU.[1] =

1. Increase in the number of counterfeit products[2]
2. Poor quality products on the market leading to an increasing number of worrying cases of non compliant products. Some of which have been identified under the European Rapid Alert system for dangerous products (RAPEX).[3]

**Concern that respirator users in Europe could be unknowingly exposed to contaminants.**

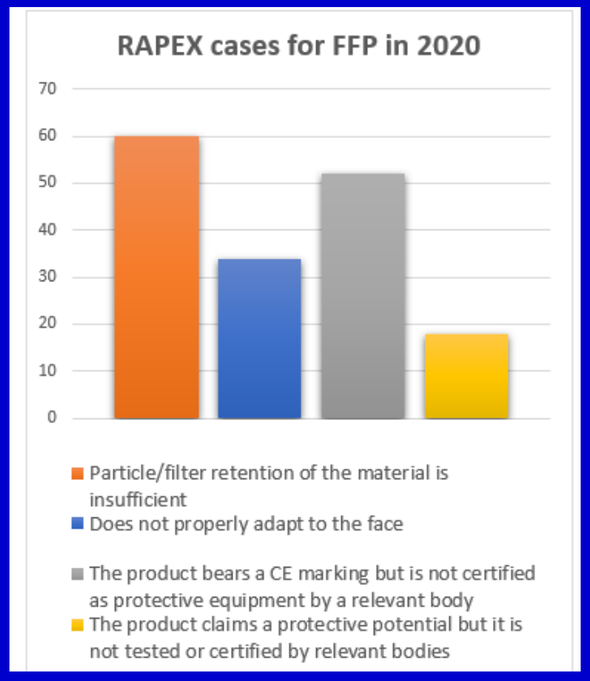
For more information see 3M whitepaper - Review on studies flagging non-compliant filtering facepiece respirators across the EU

"N.B. Not all new products on the European market were of low quality.

1 Official Journal of the European Union. COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION (EU) 2020/403.

2 3M PPE How to identify fraudulent offers, counterfeit products and price gouging.

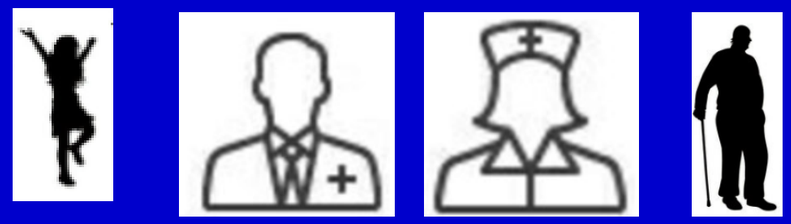
3 Safety Gate for dangerous non-food products (europa.eu)




## New Users

Respirators, particularly disposable respirators or FFP became common place outside of industrial settings. Concerns grew around the suitability of existing products for the extended demographic of wearers.

**Respirator face fit testing is one way of helping wearers understand which tight fitting respirator may suit their particularly face shape and size.**



## The "Confusion"

Exactly what does a face covering/community mask do? Why is a respirator different?

Although many agencies tried to advise the general public that ***"Face coverings are mainly intended to protect others and not the wearer"***[4] many people still do not fully appreciate that face covering, and some surgical masks, do not protect the wearer from airborne particulate hazards. When correctly worn, tight fitting respirators, loose/tight fitting fitting powered air respirators, may be appropriate for wearer protection. Loose fitting "mask" are not.

**Industrial workers in Europe need to understand that a face covering will NOT protect them from an airborne respiratory hazard such as silica, or cement dust.**

4 UK HSE Website Face coverings and face masks during the coronavirus pandemic – HSE

## What this means for the Future?

New types products and new standards? New proposal for a standards concerning protective devices for **infection prevention**

The need to improve wearer understanding about the importance of respiratory protection and the differences between protecting the wearer from airborne particles in the environment, or, the environment from particles expelled by the wear s they breath and talk. (http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15459624.2016.1225157)

A growing interest in respirator decontamination and reuse

A increase in the awareness about the importance of a properly fitting respirator (Respirator Face Fit Testing). 3M whitepaper – Protecting EU Workers from Respiratory Diseases