

# Figuring out mask use during summer heat

**A**s the COVID-19 pandemic carries on into summer, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continues to recommend wearing cloth face coverings in public spaces where social-distancing measures are difficult to manage. This is especially true in areas of the country with clusters of community-based transmission.

“During this pandemic, I would wear a face covering anytime I’m near another person at work or in public,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said.

It’s important to understand how to stay safe, and comfortable, in the heat when wearing face masks as part of the job. Some carriers say that, since they work by themselves on their routes, they do not wear one unless a customer approaches them. Many also say they wear them in the post office and when they deliver to businesses, as required by some state laws regarding public places.

“I’m following New Jersey guidelines and only wearing [a face covering] in a business or if a customer has to speak with me,” Cape Atlantic, NJ Branch 903 member **James Albertson** said. “When I walk into the business, bandanna goes up; walk out, bandanna comes down. Bandanna goes up on the street if I can’t social distance.”

In an April 25 statement, President Rolando wrote: “The Postal Service released a mandatory stand-up talk which states that until the COVID-19 pandemic is no longer an issue, employees must wear face coverings or masks when there is a local or state face-covering order or directive in place, or when an employee who does not deal directly with the public cannot achieve or maintain social distancing in the workplace. Cloth

face coverings or masks are mandatory, consistent with such local or state face-covering directives or orders.

“The situations in which face coverings or masks must be worn and the expiration date of the orders vary greatly amongst the many jurisdictions. Check any mandates in your area for specific requirements.”

Several carriers had suggestions for what to do to keep cool during the times you need to wear a mask.

“My wife bought us ... cooling towels, [to be] used as a mask when needed as well,” Emerald Coast, FL Branch 4559 member **Justin Hill** said. The makers of the cooling towels say they are a type of cloth that wicks moisture away and can keep a person cooler during exercise. “It has been the best we can find for the summer heat here in Florida,” he added.

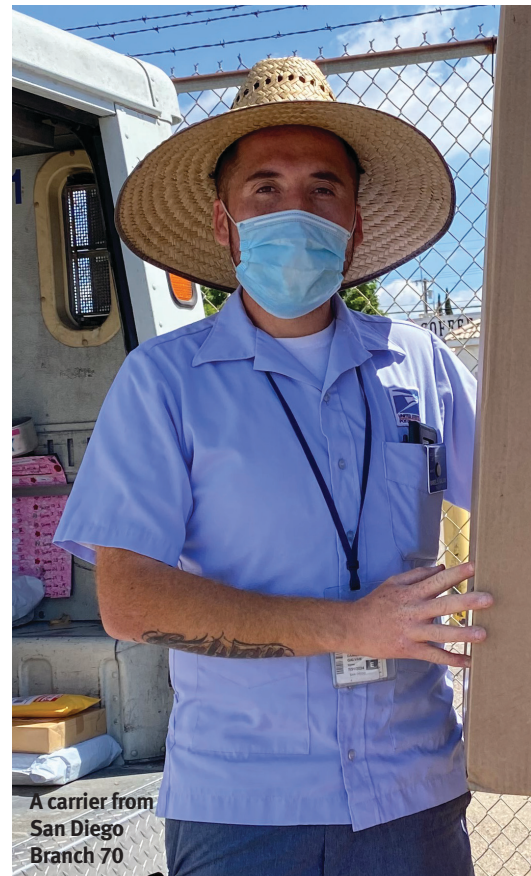
Another letter carrier recommended putting something cool around the neck when it’s hot outside, such as a wet towel or neck fan. “With it already being hot and some carriers having to get in and out of their vehicles frequently, their body temperature is increasing and they are perspiring, losing water,” Pensacola, FL Branch 321 member **Niquita Potter** said.

“Drinking water and a cooling method like the wet towel or neck fan will help with maintaining a safe body temperature. Breaks are important, as well as the availability of ice and water.”

Occasionally using wet wipes or washing your face were other frequently suggested tips.

## USPS tests different types of face coverings

The Postal Service conducted testing in Fort Lauderdale and Tampa, FL; Dallas, TX; and Greenwood, SC, regarding the use of various types of



materials and styles to be used as face coverings during the hotter months. The styles of coverings tested included various bandanna-type masks, neck gaiters and even cooling masks.

Results indicated that letter carriers liked three of the five styles tested, two of which were the neck gaiter style, and the other being a bandanna style.

“The Postal Service is now in the process of ordering sufficient supplies of the face coverings preferred by the carriers in the test sites,” Rolando said. “We are also discussing the use of fans in the workplace as it relates to CDC recommendations during the pandemic.” **PR**