

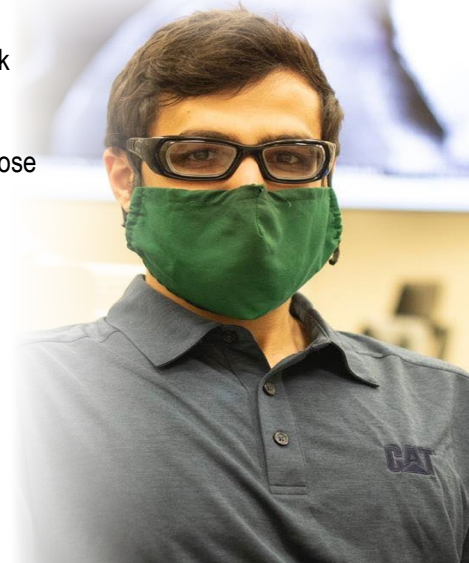
Effective Communication While Wearing Face Coverings

The health and safety measures taken during the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in significant changes in our lives. Social distancing, remote work, and avoiding large gatherings have changed some of the most basic ways we live.

Many of us are wearing protective face coverings to lower health and safety risks. Masks and face coverings are inconvenient in many ways. And a large downside is the impact they have on our social relationships. When wearing masks, our speech is muffled and harder to understand. We tend to engage less with others. Some people avoid social interactions all together if they must wear a mask. The result can be lower quality and fewer social connections with others, during a time when we need them most.

Here are some tips to stay engaged and connected while wearing face coverings.

- **Don't isolate any more than is necessary.** Many of us try to stay at home or isolated due to concerns for our — and others' — health. But social connections are an important part of our Total Health. Stay engaged with others. And when you are among other people at work or in public, commit to connecting with those around you.
- **Make sure you have the other person's attention. Make eye contact.** This is important with people you know and those you don't. Look people in the eyes. Exaggerate your eyes, eyebrows, and "smile and frown muscles" so your facial expressions can be detected through the mask.
- **Use increased hand gestures and body language.** Use your hands to punctuate your verbal communication and help make points that can be lost with face coverings. Wave before you get close to someone. It helps to get attention, engage the other person, and avoid awkward decisions around shaking hands. Adjust your posture and positioning to help clarify your message and intent.
- **Speak up and listen.** Don't yell. But you may need to speak a bit louder or adjust your tone to be heard through a mask. Slow the pace of your speech and take pauses to allow yourself to be heard and understood. Avoid talking over or interrupting the other person. Take the time to listen.
- **Be aware.** Recognize if the person you are speaking with is struggling to understand. Find a quiet place. Ask for clarification if you don't understand. Ask them if they understand.
- **Stay masked if you cannot stay distanced.** Avoid the inclination to pull your mask down when you are talking.
- **Be patient.** Any barrier to communication can be frustrating, but connecting with those around you is worth the extra time and effort.



For confidential support, free of charge, contact Caterpillar's **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**:

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