Limit The Liabilities of Your PPE

By John Berchulc, Novagard (Makers of Foam Seal)

They were the 'ordinary' people doing extraordinary things. The brave and resilient ones who became our 'heroes' — first responders, nurses, doctors, aides … Always in the midst of the pandemic, right there in the thick of the fear and very real danger. Everyday, each of them literally came face-to-face with COVID, making the big question, 'What type of personal protective equipment is best? A mask? A shield? A mask and shield?…" Soon enough, best practices were revealed and the most effective combinations of PPE understood. But a global surge in demand was outstripping supply. Now — with producing more PPE as fast as possible the essential goal — the question is: What are these protective devices being made of …?

Material Matters

You've seen their faces. Staring at the camera after a harrowing shift. Nasty red blotches pressed across their forehead, straddling their nose, burning hot from their cheeks. While long hours of wearing the PPE would seem the reason, the true culprit was much more likely the type of foam material used inside.

Comfort can be seriously compromised with the wrong choice of foam.

The slightly rougher, more abrasive surface of an open cell structure can cause chafing against the skin, while the open cells themselves capture sweat, further adding to the itchy irritation.

Then there's the chemical factor to be considered … Can the make-up of the foam material possibly break down? Are you breathing it in? Could that cause a bad reaction? Fillers, especially, can result in off-gassing and fogging, which can make for a horrible irony: in protecting a person against what lurks outside the mask, exposing them to what lurks inside of it.

While, initially, the low cost and speed of foam supplied from around the globe was desired, the liability of producing PPE with the wrong foam couldn't be ignored: our heroes suffering from irritation, abrasiveness, and allergic reactions to chemical residues.

The Answer

One day, we received a call: Does Novagard have a foam product that was certified safe against the skin? As the manufacture of Foam Seal, we have a reputation for quality means of sealing, gasketing, and insulating across several industries. But we also have something else: a very energetic, very able R&D team. Indeed, yes, we can produce a foam product which could be certified safe.

Novagard's Foam Seal Medical Grade Foam is a100% closed-cell, low density PVC foam. So it will not absorb sweat (or, for that matter, any of the chemical fumes from sanitation solutions being applied to a surface).

This low VOC medical grade foam material is completely sulphur-free, and has been independently tested and certified to comply with the stringent ISO 10993-10 protocol for direct skin contact.

Novagard's skin-safe Foam Seal Medical Grade Foam can be manufactured to desired specifications in any gauge from .0625" to 1", with or without a pressure sensitive adhesive added, and offers a range of uses in the production of medical products, such as:

- Face shields
- Face masks
- Diagnostic devices
- Therapeutic accessories
- Pads for diagnostic & therapeutic devices
- Wheelchair seating

It Feels Good

It has been reported that hospitals on the East coast preferred PPE with our foam over all others, not only because it could be sanitized between uses, but because their nurses and doctors found it softer, more comfortable, with no skin irritation over time.

Our 'heroes' noticed and appreciated the improved performance of PPE made with Novagard closed-cell, sulphur-free Medical Grade Foam Seal. It made a positive difference in their lives. As they were giving their all to save the lives of others.

And, boy, did that help us feel really good. Learn more at novagard.com.