

News | LA to purchase 24 million N95 medical masks from Honeywell, says Garcetti

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Frontline workers in the health care industry say N95 masks, like this one, are in short supply on March 26, 2020. (Photo by Dean Musgrove, Los Angeles Daily News/SCNG)

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The city of Los Angeles has signed a deal with Honeywell to purchase 24 million N95 masks, which are medical grade, that will be sold “at cost to hospitals in need,” according to Los Angeles [Mayor Eric Garcetti](#).

The first 100,000 will arrive in May, and another 500,000 delivered in July, he said. By November, the city will be receiving 1.2 million masks per month.

“These will be lifesavers, quite literally,” Garcetti said during this briefing, Tuesday, April 28.

Instead of healthcare providers going from “vendor-to-vendor buying in several thousand from here and several thousand from there,” the city will be buying them in bulk at a lower cost, Garcetti said.

The masks being purchased through Honeywell “will meet our American standards” and will be “produced by a factory in the United States,” he added.

The deal came as the result of an initiative, dubbed Logistics Victory LA, to help the city build its own equipment stockpile, Garcetti said.

With the federal government's stockpile "nonexistent," and the state's being so "oversubscribed," the mayor said "with so many folks looking for help, we decided to go out and do it on our own."

The masks cost 79 cents apiece, plus tax, Los Angeles Port Director Gene Seroka said. The money will not be paid upfront, with the city paying for the masks "as they come off the production line," he added.

The mayor noted that these days, such masks can sometimes go for between \$7 to \$13 due to the demand.

Garcetti said his office worked with the City Council to ensure "we can spend money quickly when we have deals like this to jump on," Garcetti said.

In response to the public health crisis, city officials have in recent weeks pulled \$70 million from the reserves and a special fund, and placed the funds into a COVID-19 emergency account to help purchase equipment and pay for other expenses, including \$2 million to provide healthcare services at emergency homeless shelters and \$1.7 million to set up the Los Angeles Convention Center as a medical relief site.

The city has allocated \$20 million of the emergency money toward Logistics Victory LA to build the city stockpile.

Seroka said the goal of the initiative is to "find ways to speed product to market, using the great seaport of Los Angeles as well as LAX, and our knowledge of the domestic transportation network to make sure we are highlighting and prioritizing these critical shipments to get them to our hospitals."

This deal with Honeywell will only be a start, because demand is now so much greater, according to Seroka. Some hospitals have told port officials that they need 5 million of the masks "just to survive the next couple of months," while other hospitals say that the number of masks they go through have leapt from 30,000 a month to 300,000, he said.

The logistics initiative also extends to the procurement of other types of personal protective equipment, he said, such as exam gloves and isolation gowns for medical workers and patients.

For example, isolation gowns were delivered to Pomona Valley Medical Hospital, and the St Francis Medical Center in Lynwood last week, Seroka said.

"These were folks who were going to go out to the stores to buy hefty bags, cut holes in them so they could go and take care of our medically ill," he said.

Seroka said efforts are also underway to convert California manufacturing facilities to make the gear.

“There are a number of good stories developing right now, with folks who have turned over their production lines, hired back their workers and are getting products to market again ... very close proximity, not waiting for overseas shipments,” Seroka said.

The initiative has also received equipment donations from major companies, such as Apple, while a trucking company in Gardena, Next Trucking, has participated in delivering facemasks, Seroka said.

Garcetti said Tuesday that the city serves as a bridge between dozens of businesses and the medical workers who need the PPEs, including WET design in Sun Valley, which is producing face shields. That company, founded by a former Disney Imagineers, produces water shows such as the performance fountain at the Bellagio casino in Las Vegas and the Dubai Fountain.



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Elizabeth Chou has reported on Los Angeles City Hall government and politics since 2013, first with City News Service, and now the Los Angeles Daily News since the end of 2016. She grew up in the Los Angeles area, and is formerly a San Gabriel Valley girl. She now resides in the other Valley, and is enjoying exploring her new San Fernando environs. She previously worked at Eastern Group Publications, covering the cities of Montebello, Monterey Park, City of Commerce, and Vernon. She earned a BA degree in literature from the University of California, Santa Cruz.

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