

Manufacturing PPE to Tackle the Coronavirus

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Personal protective equipment (PPE) is now one of the most sought-after commodities in the world. Global shortages from the coronavirus pandemic have created new opportunities for garment manufacturers whose business took a hit from the drop in clothing demand.

According to an article in *The Conversation*, Barbour is one of the latest western brands to temporarily turn over its production line to make PPE for frontline healthcare workers. Meanwhile, other fashion retailers simply cancelled their orders to their garment suppliers in Asia. (1)

But in countries like China, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Bangalore, garment manufacturers made the switch to PPE on their own initiative and soon were backed by clothing retailers as the virus spread west. (1)

Now, health administrations are calling for new strategies and augmented procedures to manage the supply and demand of PPE.

There have also been calls for revised quality control rules. In Canada, for instance, Health Canada is expediting both the approvals of exported medical devices as well as the establishment and site licences related to these types of products. (2)

Practical Considerations for Manufacturers Pivoting to PPE

Canada is responding in other ways, to help manufacturers of other products switch their production lines to make PPE in an effort to address the supply shortage of masks, surgical gowns, and other Class 1 medical devices. They include the following steps and recommendations:

1. Collaboration with an existing manufacturer

This means relying on existing, approved manufacturing procedures, quality assurance programmes and certificates of conformity held by existing PPE manufacturers.

Manufacturers that do not currently produce PPE but want to help should contact firms already making the equipment, or consider reaching out to the appropriate regulatory authorities or industry trade associations acting as intermediaries to make connections. (3)

2. Licensing

Medical Device Establishment Licence (MDEL) is Canada's licence issued to Class I manufacturers as well as importers or distributors of all device classes to permit them to import or distribute a medical device.

Anyone who imports or sells a medical device for human use in Canada requires an MDEL. They must apply for and maintain their MDEL to ensure compliance with the Food and Drugs Act and its Medical Devices Regulations. More information about licencing and exceptions to

licencing requirements is available on the government website. (4)

3. Liability

Liability can stem from potential product defects and licensing infringements. In these cases, the licensor will want to ensure it does not attract liability for manufacturing steps undertaken by a non-specialised manufacturer, whereas the manufacturer will want reassurance that its PPE manufacturing process is sound.

4. Preparing the floor for production

Pivots on the factory floor include ensuring manufacturing facilities meet the new health and safety guidelines for medical experts. This includes making sure work stations are distanced six feet apart, that protective gloves are provided, and sanitary stations set up.

Manufacturers also need to figure out workflow and training of staff - all with little to no outside help or guidance.

The MedThree Advantage

Manufacturers who want to help in the fight against coronavirus are having to pivot and pivot quickly. MedThree Insurance Group can help by providing the protection manufacturers need with specialized experience in the healthcare industry.

Visit our website for more information on how MedThree's tailored insurance policies can meet the needs of your organization.

Content is current as of the date of broadcast and is subject to change without notice.

Sources:

1. <https://theconversation.com/how-asias-clothing-factories-switched-to-making-ppe-but-sweatshop-problems-live-on-141396>
2. <https://healthycanadians.gc.ca/recall-alert-rappel-avis/hc-sc/2020/72623a-eng.php>
3. <https://www.bakermckenzie.com/en/insight/publications/2020/03/manufacturing-personal-protective-equipment>
4. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/compliance-enforcement/establishment-licences/directives-guidance-documents-policies/guidance-medical-device-establishment-licensing-0016.html>