

American Medical Manufacturers Urge New York to Prioritize U.S.-Made N95 Respirators During Wildfire Smoke Emergency

Trade Group Says State and City Are Distributing Chinese-Made KN95 Masks While NIOSH-Approved, Domestically Manufactured N95 Respirators Remain Available

NEW YORK CITY, NY, UNITED STATES, July 16, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As smoke from Canadian wildfires affects air quality across the United States, New York Governor Kathy Hochul and New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani have directed residents to free KN95 mask distribution sites across the city. The American Medical Manufacturers Association (AMMA) says NIOSH-approved N95 respirators, produced in New York and elsewhere in the U.S., are also available and offer more rigorously tested protection.



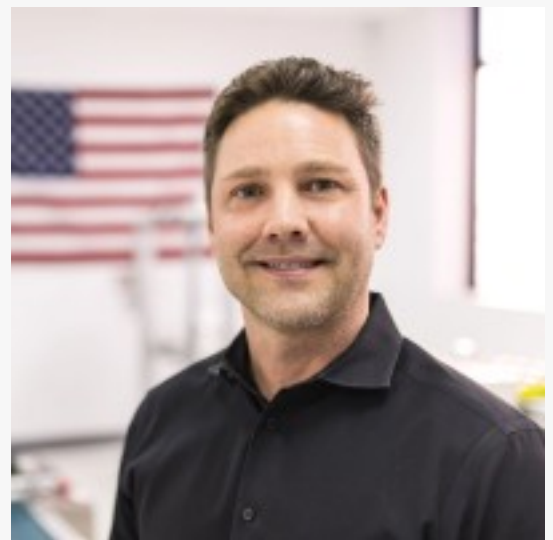
American Medical Manufacturers Association Executive Director Eric Axel said, "By choosing KN95s, Governor Hochul and Mayor Mamdani are telling people to line up for Chinese masks, bought with American taxpayer funds, during a dangerous smoke emergency. They have a chance to support good-paying jobs in New York City and State. Instead, they are bypassing in-state and other U.S. manufacturers who can supply NIOSH-approved N95 respirators. That is bad public health policy, bad economic policy, and bad for our national security."

Health authorities say fine particles in wildfire smoke can penetrate deep into the lungs and bloodstream, potentially triggering or worsening respiratory and cardiovascular conditions. AMMA says N95 respirators, rather than imported KN95 masks, provide the higher level of protection it believes is warranted during this type of emergency.

KN95 is a Chinese regulatory standard. According to AMMA, KN95 masks are not manufactured in the United States, are certified by Chinese authorities rather than by NIOSH, and are generally designed for consumer rather than high-risk occupational use.

"This is outrageous," said Tom Allen, President of the American Medical Manufacturers Association (AMMA) and CEO of New York-based Altor Safety, which manufactures respirators and PPE.

Allen added, "New Yorkers are breathing wildfire smoke, and their leaders are handing out Chinese masks while U.S. manufacturers stand ready with NIOSH-approved N95 respirators. That is a slap in the face to local and U.S.-based manufacturers and a reckless choice for public health."



Tom Allen, President of AMMA and Altor Safety

N95 respirators are certified by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)

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*Eric Axel, Executive Director,
AMMA*

and must meet federal workplace safety testing and auditing requirements. KN95 masks are certified under Chinese government standards, which rely primarily on manufacturer self-certification, according to AMMA.

AMMA says reliance on Chinese-made masks raises additional supply chain concerns, pointing to ongoing federal scrutiny, including Section 301 investigations and proposed forced-labor tariffs, of goods linked to forced labor in parts of China's manufacturing sector.

"Even in emergencies, public dollars should not underwrite supply chains tied to human rights and forced labor

concerns," Allen said. "They should support American workers and American standards. Right now, New York is doing the opposite."

AMMA says U.S. manufacturers have expanded production capacity since the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the association, AMMA member companies can produce about 435 million N95 respirators per year — roughly 97 percent of the estimated 450 million in routine annual U.S. demand — and could scale to as many as 1.5 billion N95s annually in an emergency. AMMA suppliers also manufacture reusable respirators with replaceable cartridges.

New York is home to several AMMA member companies, including Altor Safety, HPK Industries,

and New York Embroidery Studio / NY Protect, which manufacture NIOSH-approved respirators and PPE in the state.

"First and foremost, New Yorkers should stay safe and wear a properly fitting respirator if they have to be outside in the smoke," said Michelle Feinberg, CEO of New York Embroidery Studio. "I am glad the City is making masks available. But New York should be prioritizing domestically manufactured, NIOSH-approved N95 respirators whenever they are available. That is what real leadership looks like."

Allen said the situation points to a broader issue. "We cannot afford complacency, or leaders who fall back on the cheapest overseas option to prepare for a crisis. We built and support the domestic industry, so New York would not have to rely on China for masks. That capacity exists right now."

AMMA is calling on Governor Hochul and Mayor Mamdani to:

- Prioritize domestically manufactured, NIOSH-approved N95 respirators for public distribution.
- Support regional stockpiles built on American-made PPE, consistent with the Made PPE in America Act and actions taken by both the Biden and Trump administrations with bipartisan Congressional support.

Axel said, "Today is a watershed moment for New York. We believe they have chosen dependence on foreign supply chains over supporting local businesses. We urge them to change course for the sake of public safety and economic security."

About AMMA

The American Medical Manufacturers Association (AMMA) is an alliance of domestic makers of critical medical supplies, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) manufacturers, and partners dedicated to transforming the landscape of American innovation and manufacturing. AMMA's mission is to ensure that the United States has consistent access to high-quality, U.S.-made PPE while actively working to create a more favorable environment for American innovation. AMMA fosters strategic partnerships, advocates for policy changes, and supports domestic producers. AMMA aims to catalyze a thriving ecosystem for medical manufacturing.

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