Masks and Fogging Glasses

In 1991 my company decided to produce products that required a Therapeutic Goods licence. The licence required us to erect a clean room that necessitated filtered air to be fed into the room so that the room was under a slight pressure. An adjoining room was required for the staff to gown-up in light white over-alls, hair net and face mask. Properly attired you then washed and dried your hands, put on gloves, then entered the clean room to mix/bottle the product.

On entering the clean room in cold weather, those who wore glasses immediately had the problem of fogging. This was really annoying, but eventually we found that washing the lenses with soapy water and then drying with a hot air blower solved the problem.

Washing the spectacles with soapy water leaves behind a thin surfactant film that reduces surface tension and causes the moisture to spread out evenly into a transparent layer. You can use commercial anti-fog products, but these are expensive. Either solution may not work as well on glasses with anti-glare or anti smudge coatings.

We also found that the fit of your face mask is important. You need to prevent your exhaled breath from reaching your glasses by making sure the top of your mask is tight and the bottom loose, to help direct your exhaled breath away from your eyes. When the mask fits properly, most of your breath should go through it, not out the top or sides.

Although more expensive, I have found that the N95 mask is a better fit around the nose than the disposable medical masks. This may be because the N95 mask has two elastic bands instead of ear loops that enable you to get a better fit. It is important that the multi-layer cloth masks being produced by home machinists also have a good fit.

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