**N-95 masks**

**Context**

- The Government has notified N-95 Masks as an essential commodity under *Essential Commodities Act, 1955*.
- Thus, *hoarding, black-marketing of the essential commodity* is punishable offence under the Act.
- To keep check on the hoarding, black-marketing of the essential commodity, NPPA in exercise of the powers conferred under *National Disaster Management Act, 2005* had directed all States/ UT Governments to ensure *sufficient availability of surgical and protective Masks, Hand Sanitizers and Gloves* at prices not exceeding the Maximum Retail Price printed on the pack size vide Orders dated 13th March 2020.

**N95 Respirators**

- An N95 respirator is a *respiratory protective device* designed to achieve a very close facial fit and very *efficient filtration of airborne particles*.
- The 'N95' designation means that when subjected to careful testing, the respirator blocks at least *95 percent* of very small (0.3 micron) test particles.
- If properly fitted, the filtration capabilities of N95 respirators exceed those of face masks.
- However, even a properly fitted N95 respirator does not completely eliminate the risk of illness or death.

**Comparing Surgical Masks and Surgical N95 Respirators**

- The FDA regulates surgical masks and surgical N95 respirators differently based on their intended use.
- A *surgical mask* is a loose-fitting, disposable device that creates a physical barrier between the mouth and nose of the wearer and potential contaminants in the immediate environment. These are *often referred to as face masks*, although not all face masks are regulated as surgical masks. Note that the edges of the mask are not designed to form a seal around the nose and mouth.
- An *N95 respirator* is a respiratory protective device designed to achieve a very close facial fit and very efficient filtration of airborne particles. Note that the edges of the respirator are designed to form a seal around the nose and mouth. Surgical N95 Respirators are commonly used in healthcare settings and are a subset of N95 Filtering Facepiece Respirators (FFRs), often referred to as N95s.

**The similarities among surgical masks and surgical N95s are:**

- They are tested for *fluid resistance*, *filtration efficiency* (particulate filtration efficiency and bacterial filtration efficiency), *flammability* and *biocompatibility*.
- They should not be shared or reused.