

After Foxconn, it was Sharp's turn to mass produce masks in super-clean rooms

The Japanese electronics maker plans to create 150,000 masks a day on demand from the government.

Sharp will begin manufacturing surgical masks in Japan next month, becoming the first domestic company outside the medical industry to do so in response to the government's call to boost production.

The production process will begin in mid-March, with a daily output of 150,000 masks.

Sharp expects its facemask to be available by the end of March, amid the country facing a massive Corona virus outbreak, forcing the government to set up a national mask stockpiling program.

Foxconn Technology Group, Sharp's Taiwanese parent company, has set up its own mask production line at its manufacturing plant in Shenzhen to supply masks to the company's workforce. The world's largest iPhone assembler, whose trade name is Hon Hai Precision Industry, plans to produce 2 million masks a day by the end of February.

Facemasks are now scarce because consumers are rushing to shop to protect themselves from the Corona virus pandemic. China has supplied 70% of masks sold in Japan, but these goods were almost halted because China itself faced a serious outbreak.



Foxconn employees wear a mask in a year-round gala in Taipei on January 22

Sharp plans to use super-clean rooms in its factory in Mie Prefecture, originally designed to produce liquid glass screen panels. The company will start with three production lines, but plans to expand to 10 lines to produce 500,000 masks each day.

Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, has called on companies to step up production of masks, while his administration decided to spend 10.3 billion yen (about US \$ 94 million) to deal with the new virus. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga, a senior government spokesman, announced it would increase domestic mask production to 600 million a month by March.

Under the plan, Sharp will receive a grant of 30 million Yen for its efforts. The number of manufacturers' masks is likely to account for a few percent of Japan's total domestic mask supply.

Well-known Japanese mask manufacturers, led by Unicharm, produced 20 million masks each week before the Corona virus broke out. The total output of Japanese masks has jumped to 100 million a week.

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