

## **THE HARM OF DISPOSABLE MASKS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT**

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Due to the epidemiological situation masks have become one of the most common types of garbage now. The introduction of a mask regime due to the coronavirus pandemic has already affected the state of the environment. It is estimated that more than two million disposable masks are thrown away every day in Belarus. They are made of polymer fibres, which are not recycled in our country. Masks thrown on the streets end up in drains and eventually end up in the sea. Disposable protective masks contain plastic that pollutes the soil and water, and also poses danger to wild animals. In addition, masks decompose for about 500 years, so such items represent a real environmental time bomb with long-term negative consequences for our planet. Once in nature, the masks begin to disintegrate and become small particles as small as 5 millimetres. Over time, they turn into nanoplastics smaller than 1 micrometre, which easily penetrates into the bodies of living things and accumulate there in large quantities. According to the estimates, more than 100 thousand marine mammals and turtles, as well as a million seabirds die due to plastic pollution of the ocean every year. It may seem that wildlife issues are secondary compared to the hundreds of thousands of deaths from the virus around the world. But man is inseparable from nature and is part of it. The solution to this problem could be more conscious use of masks, ecological habits and proper waste management [1].

### **References**

1. Чем опасны одноразовые маски для диких животных и окружающей среды? Активизм. 09.12.2020 г. [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа [http://socnews.by/activism/2020/12/09/article\\_55957](http://socnews.by/activism/2020/12/09/article_55957); – Дата доступа: 16.02.2022.