

China is 'not allowing US companies to ship millions of surgical masks and coronavirus test kits' back to the States

- Beijing placed restrictions on exports of critically needed medical supplies
- US companies like 3M and PerkinElmer have products stranded in warehouses
- PerkinElmer wants to import 1.4 million COVID-19 test kits to the US
- 3M is trying to get badly needed N-95 respirator masks out of Shanghai
- China wants products because they're better quality than domestic made items
- [Learn more about how to help people impacted by COVID](#)

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China is not allowing American companies with factories in the country to ship desperately needed medical items like masks, gowns, and **coronavirus** test kits back to the US, it has been reported.

American companies operating in China are unable to import the critically needed supplies back to the states because the government in Beijing needs those high-quality items for their own efforts to stamp out the pandemic.

China imposed export restrictions on American companies with products that have long been approved by the Food and Drug Administration because they are superior

in quality to the masks, gowns, and other personal protective items made by domestic Chinese firms.

The State Department and several US-based businesses told **The Wall Street Journal** on Thursday that millions of test kits are stranded in warehouses in China, which has so far refused to clear them for export back to the US.



Chinese President Xi Jinping is seen above in Wuhan on March 10. China's government this month has placed restrictions on exports by US-based companies seeking to bring badly needed medical supplies to the states

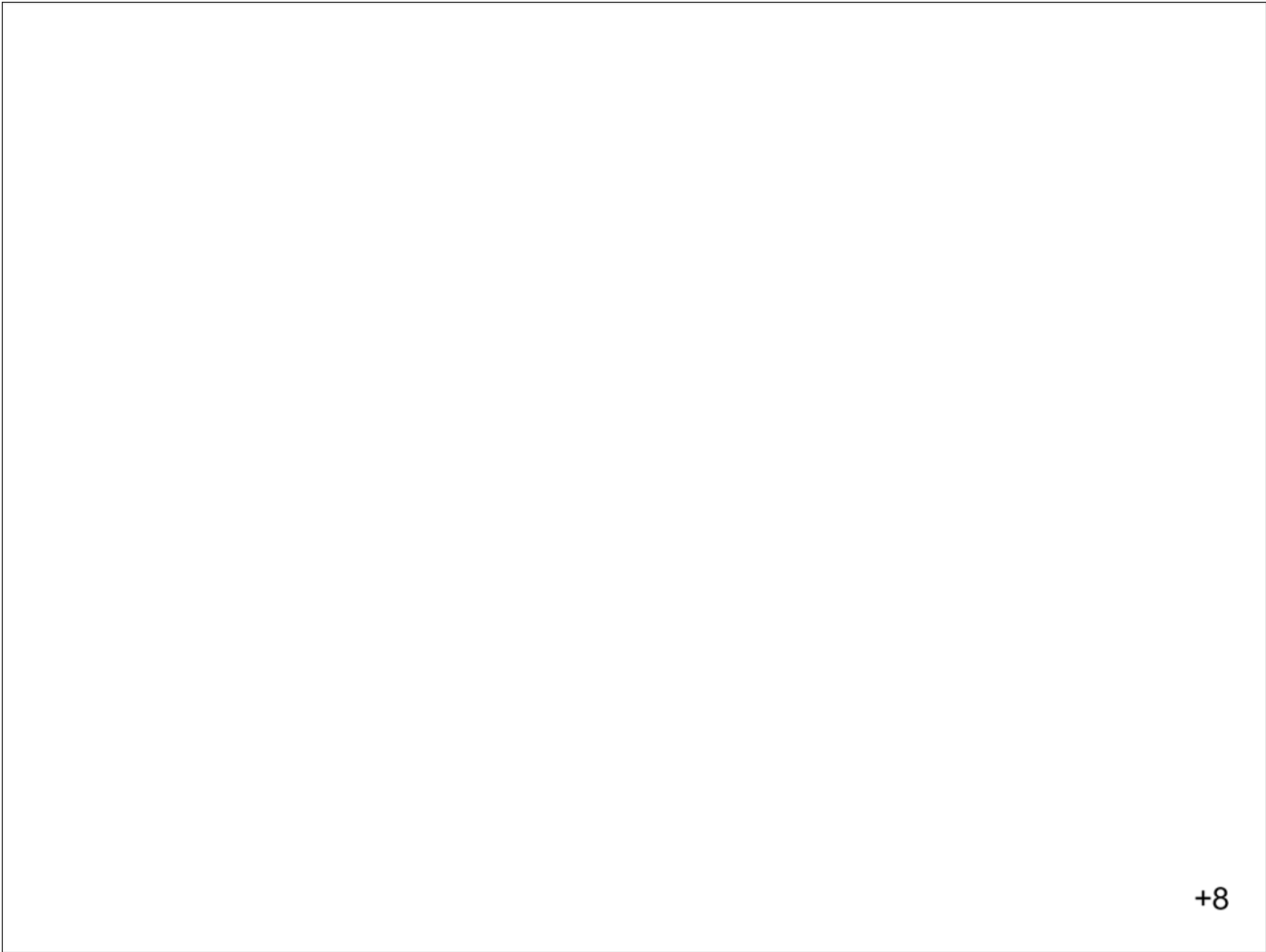
PerkinElmer Inc, a health technology firm based in the Boston suburb of Waltham, Massachusetts, has been unable to ship 1.4 million test kits for COVID-19.

The kits are currently stranded in its factory in the Chinese city of Suzhou after the central government in Beijing imposed export restrictions requiring new certification procedures, according to the Journal.

According to PerkinElmer's web site, the company has developed a 'real-time' test kit.

The company told the Journal that it is working with authorities in Beijing to clear the test kits for export.

Another US-based firm, 3M, is also having difficulty getting clearance from Beijing to ship urgently needed N-95 respirator masks, which are in short supply among hospital staff around the country.



PerkinElmer, a Massachusetts-based health technology company, is seeking to bring COVID-19 tests currently warehoused in China. A company warehouse is seen above in China on Thursday

A Communist Party official in Shanghai reportedly told the Minnesota-based 3M that the city 'relies on 3M's locally produced N-95 respirators for its COVID-19 prevention efforts and lacks viable alternatives.'

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The Shanghai vice mayor 'signaled that lifting restrictions on distribution of the company's masks would require instructions from Beijing,' according to a memo written by 3M.

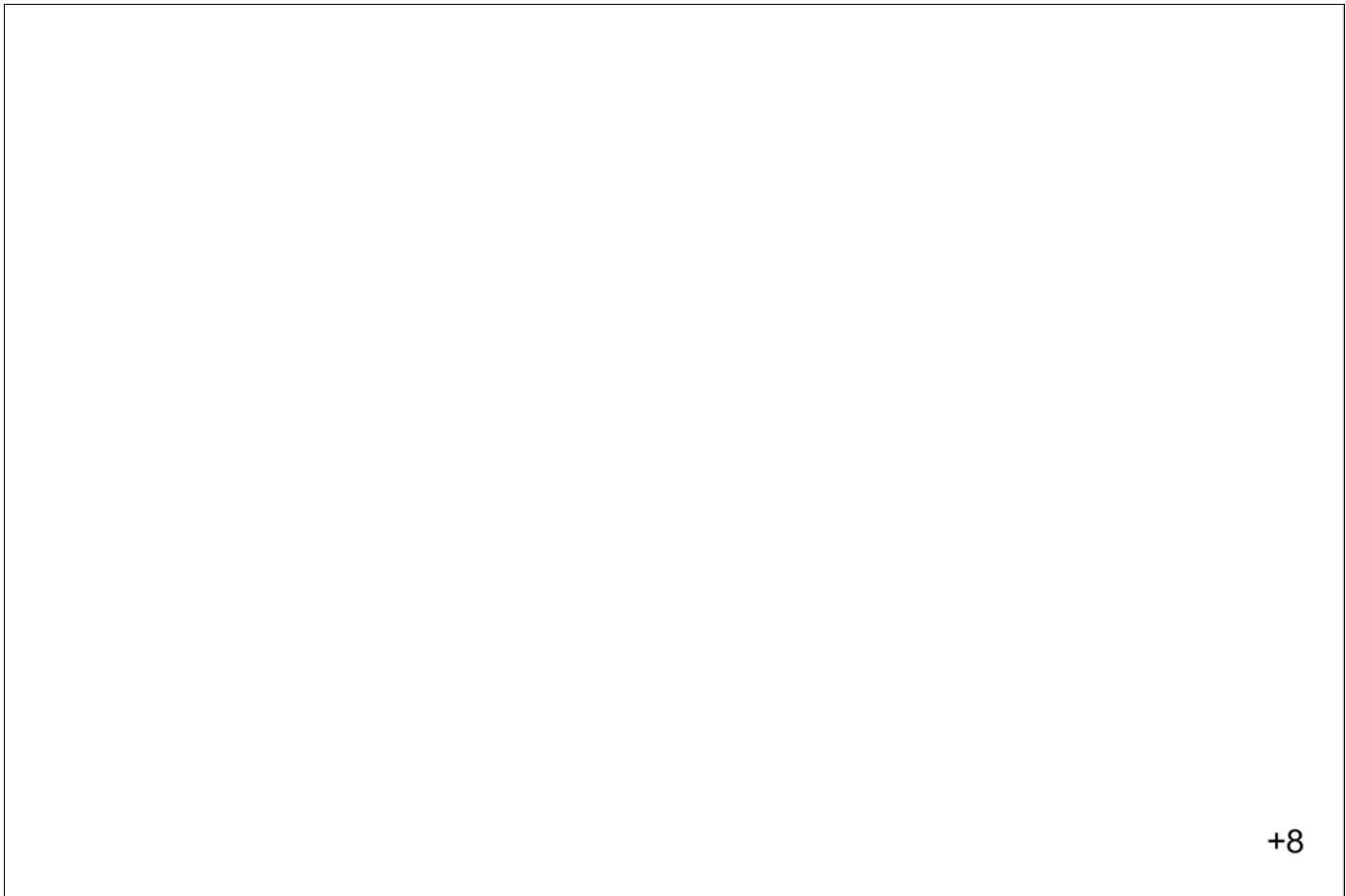
A spokesperson for 3M told the Journal that it received shipments from China and is working to coordinate more.

The company said that the task of shipping the products to the states is complicated by the fact that there are fewer airplanes available than usual.

China's government instituted the restrictions this month in order to make sure that high-quality items stay in the country as it battles its own coronavirus outbreak.

The State Department said that Beijing's new policy has 'disrupted established supply chains for medical products just as these products were most needed for the global response to Covid-19.'

When asked about the Chinese government's export restrictions, China's embassy in Washington, DC, said: 'Countries across the world are all hunting for medical supplies, causing a big challenge for China's efforts of quality control and regulation of export.'



3M, the Minnesota-based firm, also has millions of N-95 masks bound for the US stranded in China. Vice President Mike Pence is seen above at the company's Maplewood, Minnesota headquarters on March 5

More than 40 per cent of the world's masks, gloves, goggles, visors, and medical garments are manufactured in China, according to the Journal.

The Trump administration has instructed its diplomats in China to help American companies, states, and the federal government arrange for shipments of masks, gloves, and ventilators to the US, the Journal reported.

Local officials said that the delays could end up costing American lives.

'Every single day we don't have the proper protective equipment is a new health-care worker exposed, is a new hole in the ship that is our current hospital system and ICU bed structure,' said Illinois Deputy Gov. Christian Mitchell.

Mitchell, who is in charge of the state's efforts to procure PPE, was told by companies to expect a six-to-10-day delay in receiving the supplies from China.

The delays in shipments, which have created a bottleneck that has made combating

the coronavirus more difficult for health care professionals, have exacerbated simmering tensions between Washington and Beijing.

The two governments have been engaged in a war of words over their alleged roles in the pandemic.

The Americans say China was not transparent enough in the early stages of the outbreak, while Beijing has

suggested that the US military brought the pathogen to the Communist country.

Reports on Thursday indicated that the Americans were investigating the possibility that the coronavirus originated inside a lab in Wuhan and that safety lapses led to an accidental leakage, igniting the current crisis.

In an effort to soften its battered image in the eyes of the world, China started shipping badly needed materials to European countries in the grip of the pandemic which originated in Wuhan.

But when those recipient countries complained of the poor quality of the products, China announced the new export restrictions.

China required companies seeking to ship out the items to first obtain certification from the National Medical Products Administration.

Last week, China added more red tape, requiring extra checks before surgical protective gear, masks, and ventilators are allowed to be exported.

