

MEMORANDUM

To: Agency Directors
From: Marcia Adams
Subject: Face Coverings in State Government Buildings

Agency Directors,

By Executive Order No. 2020-50, Governor Henry McMaster has directed that effective close of business on Aug. 3, 2020, face coverings must be worn in all state government offices, buildings, and facilities, and that the South Carolina Department of Administration (Admin) would issue guidance on the directive.

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance on the face coverings directive both for employees and for members of the public who enter state government offices, buildings and facilities. The guidance is based on the information available to Admin at the time of issuance and additional or supplemental clarification, guidance, rules, regulations, or restrictions may be issued based on new guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) and other public health partners or as conditions otherwise warrant.

For purposes of this guidance, a state government office, building, and/or facility is defined as any building/facility or any portion of such a building/facility that is owned by the State of South Carolina, leased by a state agency, or occupied by a state agency for purposes of conducting state business (hereinafter referred to as "State Government Building").

State Employees in State Government Buildings:

In accordance with the provisions set out below, all employees are required to wear cloth face coverings or clean disposable masks in state government buildings for the following locations/situations:

- In any common area of a state government building, including, but not limited to, the following:
 - Entrances and exits.
 - Lobbies, hallways, elevators, stairwells or restrooms.
- While interacting in-person with the public.
- While interacting in-person with another employee or employees.
- While in a state vehicle with another individual, while in a vehicle for the purposes of conducting state business that is occupied by another individual, and while using drive-through services.
- In any area that the agency occupying the state government building determines that wearing a face covering is required.

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Face coverings or masks may be removed under the following conditions:

- **Meal Breaks:** Face coverings may be removed to eat or drink during breaks and lunch periods; however, at those times, employees must practice social distancing and maintain at least 6 feet from other individuals.
- **Outside:** Face coverings are not required while working or spending time outside as long as physical distancing of 6 feet or more is maintained between the employee and other individuals.
- **Individual Workspaces:** All employees must wear face coverings while conducting their job duties, unless their individual workspaces (office, cubicle) allow them to properly social distance and maintain 6 feet from other individuals.

Exemptions:

Employees may be exempted from the requirements of this directive by their Agency Head or his/her designee under the following circumstances and to the following extent:

1. An employee who is seeking to communicate with someone who is hearing-impaired in a manner that requires the mouth to be visible. An employee seeking to communicate with someone who is hearing-impaired may be required to wear an alternative face covering, such as a face shield.
2. An employee with a health condition or disability (including, but not limited to, any person who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious or incapacitated, or is otherwise unable to put on or remove a face covering without assistance) that prevents wearing a face covering.
 - An employee with such a health condition or disability may be required to wear an alternative face covering, such as a face shield, or be granted an exemption from the directive by the agency head or his/her designee.
 - To document the need for an exemption based on a health condition or disability, an employee may be required to submit documentation from a health care provider or a written statement.
3. An employee who is engaging in strenuous exercise or physical activity provided that the employee must practice social distancing and maintain at least 6 feet from other individuals
4. An employee who must remove a face covering for purposes of identification or security screening or surveillance.
5. A person for whom wearing a face covering would create a risk to the health or safety of the person due to their occupation, job function, or work assignment where wearing a face covering would be inconsistent with industry safety standards or protocols or federal, state, or local regulations or guidelines.

The decision to grant an exemption to the directive is in the sole discretion of an Agency Head or his/her designee. When an employee is exempted from wearing a face covering based on reasons 1, 3, 4 and 5 above, the exemption terminates as soon as the circumstance giving rise to the exemption subsides.

Mask Design and Hygiene:

- **Mask Design:** Any designs or insignia on face coverings should be professional and adhere to the Agency's dress code and other policies.

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- **Mask Hygiene:** Before putting on a mask or shield, employees should clean hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Employees should make sure the mask fits snugly around the mouth and nose; if the mask has a metal wire, it should fit snugly to the bridge of the nose. Employees are permitted to wear masks provided through Admin or their own mask as long it fits snugly around the nose and mouth.
 - Avoid touching the mask while wearing it. Avoiding putting hands to the face whether wearing a mask or shield.
 - Cloth masks should be washed frequently.
 - A mask should not be worn if it is damp or when wet from saliva or mucus or when visibly soiled.
 - Remove the mask from behind or by the ear loops, being careful not to touch the front. Immediately wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds after removing the mask.

For complete guidance on wearing cloth masks, please visit the CDC's website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>

Employees failing to comply with the guidelines contained herein are subject to disciplinary action up to and including suspension or termination at the discretion of their agency head or his/her designee.

Visitors in State Government Buildings:

Subject to the exemptions set forth below, all individuals who enter a state government building shall wear a face covering. With respect to visitors in state government buildings, "face covering" shall mean a covering of the nose and mouth that is secured to the head with ties, straps, or loops over the ears or is otherwise wrapped around the lower face. A face covering can be made of natural or synthetic fabrics and can be handmade or improvised from other items. A face shield that covers the nose and mouth and extends below the chin shall satisfy the face covering requirements of this Order. Medical-grade masks or respirators shall satisfy the face covering requirements of this Order; however, according to the latest CDC guidance, these critical supplies should be reserved for use by healthcare workers and medical first responders.

Exemptions:

Visitors to state government buildings are exempt from the requirements of this directive under the following circumstances and to the following extent:

1. A child who is two (2) years old or younger or a child over the age of two (2) years whose parent, guardian, or responsible adult has been unable to place the face covering safely on the child's face. When a child under 2 years old is not wearing a face covering, adults accompanying that child shall make all reasonable efforts to promote social distancing.
2. A person who is seeking to communicate with someone who is hearing-impaired in a manner that requires the mouth to be visible and the available face covering prohibits such.
3. A person with a physical, mental, or behavioral health condition or disability (including, but not limited to, any person who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious or incapacitated, or is otherwise unable to put on or remove a face covering without assistance) that prevents wearing a face covering, provided that a person who represents that they cannot wear a face covering for one or more of these reasons should not be required to produce documentation or any other form of proof of such a condition.

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4. A person who is actively engaged in eating or drinking or obtaining a service that requires access to or visibility of the face provided that the person must practice social distancing and maintain at least 6 feet from other individuals.
5. A person who is engaging in strenuous exercise or physical activity provided that the person must practice social distancing and maintain at least 6 feet from other individuals.
6. A person who is operating or occupying a vehicle alone or with other persons who are members of the same household.
7. A person who is voting or assisting with the administration of an election, although wearing a face covering is strongly encouraged.
8. A person who must remove a face covering for purposes of identification or security screening or surveillance.
9. A person who is incarcerated in a correctional institution or short-term detention facility, which shall be governed by the rules and regulations of the applicable agency, institution, or facility.
10. A person for whom wearing a face covering would create a risk to the health or safety of the person due to their occupation, job function, or work assignment where wearing a face covering would be inconsistent with industry safety standards or protocols or federal, state, or local regulations or guidelines.

Provision of Services:

In the discretion of an agency head or his/her designee, a state governmental agency, department, official, or employee may refuse to provide in-person service to an individual who is not wearing a face covering and will not or cannot wear a face covering if an alternate means of service is readily and reasonably available to the individual and the individual is provided with information about how to access the alternate means of service.

Posters:

Admin has prepared a sample poster that can be used to notify visitors of the requirement to wear a face covering.

To view the poster and download a copy for displaying in your buildings, click [here](#).

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Division of State Human Resources Director Karen Wingo (803-422-8645).

Sincerely,

Marcia