



SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE  
WASHINGTON

16 FEB 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL MAJCOM-FCOM-FOA-DRU/CC  
DISTRIBUTION C

SUBJECT: Department of the Air Force Guidance on Use of Masks

References: (a) Executive Order on Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing, January 20, 2021  
(b) Executive Associate Director Office of Management and Budget Memorandum, "COVID-19 Safe Federal Workplace: Agency Model Safety Principles," 24 January, 2021  
(c) Secretary of Defense Memorandum, "Use of Masks and Other Public Health Measures," 4 February 2021  
(d) Air Force Surgeon General Memorandum, "Medical Guidance on 3D Printed N-95 Respirators, Face Masks, and N-95 Mask Shields/Covers," 1 April 2020  
(e) Department of the Air Force memorandum, "Department of the Air Force Guidance on Use of Cloth Face Coverings," 5 April 2020, *hereby rescinded*  
(f) AFI 36-2903, *Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel*, 7 February 2020  
(g) AFI 10-2519, *Public Health Emergencies and Incidents of Public Health Concern*, 10 December 2019  
(h) US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention CDC Face Covering: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

This memorandum is issued pursuant to References (a), (b), (c) and (d) relating to the use of masks to prevent the spread of illness. This memorandum rescinds and replaces reference (e).

The Department of the Air Force (DAF) is committed to taking every precaution to ensure the health and well-being of our military members, civilian employees, and their families in response to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The DAF supports, and will continue to implement, all measures necessary to mitigate risks of the spread of the disease.

In accordance with references (a), (b) and (c), and except as provided below, effective immediately all individuals on Department property and all individuals performing official duties on behalf of the Department from any location other than the individual's home, including those who have been vaccinated, will wear masks and maintain six feet of physical distancing.

In addition to identified Department of Defense exceptions for mask wear, the DAF-wide exceptions are as follows:

- (1) when necessary to reasonably accommodate a religious belief;
- (2) when underlying health conditions that prohibit the wear of a face covering exist and the individual is in possession of medical documentation from a health care provider outlining such a condition and the restrictions the condition places on wear of a face covering;
- (3) when outdoors and proper physical distancing can be maintained;
- (4) when actively participating in physical fitness activities either indoors or outdoors and either proper physical distancing is maintained or additional measures are implemented to mitigate the threat of transmission;

- (8) when clear or unrestricted visualization of verbal communication are essential to safe and effective operations

Per reference (c), I hereby delegate categorical or case-by-case exception authority to the requirement to wear a mask, when implementation will significantly impede mission accomplishment, to officials at a level no lower than a general officer in the grade of O-7, Senior Executive Service member (or equivalent), or, for installations that do not have an official at these levels in command, O-6 installation commanders. Upon approval of exceptions, commanders will share information up the chain of command for situational awareness.

This guidance applies to all:

- Total Force Military Personnel
- DoD Civilian Employees (including Non-Appropriated Funded Civilians)
- Family Members
- DoD Contractors
- All other individuals on DoD property, installations, and facilities

Additionally, I hereby delegate authority to The Judge Advocate General, Air and Space Forces, to issue additional categorical and case-by-case exceptions for modifications to the requirements contained in reference (c) pertaining to wear of masks, distancing, and other public health measures as necessary to conduct military justice-related proceedings and other legal representational activities.

I expect all individuals possessing delegated exception authorities pursuant to this memo to review references (a), (b), and (c) and remain consistent with the intent of the documents as they evaluate categorical and case-by-case exceptions. Our charge is to defend the nation, both with the execution of our duties and through our collective public health measures, to include the wear of masks. When making an exception decision, all individuals possessing delegated authority must weigh the operational, readiness or safety necessity of conducting a mission or task without a mask against the risk of allowing the spread of COVID-19.

We expect installation commanders to coordinate their actions with mission and installation partners. Commanders at a DAF-led joint base should refer to their Joint Basing Memorandum of Agreement for details on installation support function responsibilities and ensure proper coordination with their supported component for mask exceptions. Installation commanders at non-joint bases will coordinate the mask exceptions with mission partners. If installation commanders cannot resolve the conflict, refer the issue to the next level of command.

Additional Mask Guidance:

Masks are not required when Occupational Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is being used (e.g., PPE used by personnel on the Respiratory Protection Program, surgical masks in the healthcare setting, fire fighters wearing supplied air respirators, Airmen or Guardians wearing CBRN masks, etc.)

Commanders will ensure masks worn by uniformed military members are conservative, professional, and in keeping with dignity and respect. Any cloth items worn as face coverings (i.e., neck gaiters, neck warmers, balaclavas, etc.) should be functional, clean, and should cover the mouth and nose.

For civilian employees, commanders must either furnish masks or provide a uniform allowance per AFI 36-128, *Pay Setting and Allowances*, 17 May 2019.

Commanders will ensure compliance with applicable labor relations obligations to the extent such obligations do not conflict with the agency's ability to conduct operations during this emergency.

Surgical N-95 respirators should be reserved for health care workers but may be worn by others when required. Commanders may authorize the optional wear of other types of N-95 masks, surgical-style masks and protective gloves in consultation with local medical professionals.



JOHN P. ROTH  
Acting

cc:  
AF/CV  
AF/CC  
SF/CV  
SF/CC