



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

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MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP  
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS  
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: Use of Masks and Other Public Health Measures

We must defeat the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and defend the force against COVID-19 while protecting our Nation. In accordance with Executive Order 13991, "Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing," January 20, 2021, and Office of Management and Budget Memorandum, "COVID-19 Safe Federal Workplace: Agency Model Safety Principles," January 24, 2021, this memorandum rescinds Secretary of Defense Memorandum, "Department of Defense Guidance on Cloth Face Coverings," April 5, 2020, and provides updated guidance on the use of face coverings and masks, social distancing, and full compliance with health guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Effective immediately, all individuals on military installations, as defined below, and all individuals performing official duties on behalf of the Department from any location other than the individual's home, including outdoor shared spaces, will wear masks in accordance with the most current CDC guidelines. Individuals must wear masks continuously while on military installations except: (1) when an individual is alone in an office with floor-to-ceiling walls with a closed door; (2) for brief periods of time when eating and drinking while maintaining distancing in accordance with CDC guidelines and instructions from commanders and supervisors; (3) when the mask is required to be lowered briefly for identification or security purposes; and (4) when necessary to reasonably accommodate an individual with a disability.

Individuals must consistently wear a mask that covers the nose and mouth and that comports with all current guidance from the CDC and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Locations where masks must be worn include any common areas or shared workspaces (including open floorplan office spaces, cubicle embankments, and conference rooms) and in outdoor shared spaces. Masks recommended by the CDC include non-medical disposable masks, masks made with breathable fabric (such as cotton), masks made with tightly woven fabric (i.e., fabrics that do not let light pass through when held up to a light source), masks with two or three layers, and masks with inner filter pockets. Novelty or non-protective masks, masks with ventilation valves, or face shields are not authorized as a substitute for masks. Masks must fit properly (i.e., snugly around the nose and chin with no large gaps around the sides of the face).

All individuals on military installations and all individuals performing official duties on behalf of the Department from any location other than the individual's home will follow CDC guidance and practice physical distancing, specifically by staying at least 6 feet (about 2 arm lengths) from other people who are not from an individual's household in both indoor and outdoor spaces. Social distancing should be practiced in combination with other everyday preventive actions to reduce the spread of COVID-19, including by wearing masks, avoiding



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touching your face with unwashed hands, and frequently washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

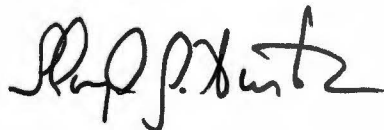
Categorical or case-by-case exceptions to these requirements for Service members and their families in environments other than office spaces that are necessary for military readiness, that are related to living on a military installation, or that are related to mask wearing by children (so long as such exceptions are consistent with CDC guidelines for mask wearing by children) may be granted in writing by DoD Component heads and should include appropriate alternative safeguards whenever feasible, such as additional physical distancing measures or additional testing consistent with DoD testing protocols. The authority to grant exceptions for all DoD Components located on the Pentagon Reservation is the Interim Director of Administration and Management. For all other situations outside of office settings when temporary unmasking is necessary for mission requirements, the authority to grant exceptions may be delegated in writing to officials at a level no lower than a general/flag officer in the grade of O-7, Senior Executive Service member (or equivalent), or, for installations that do not have officials at these levels, O-6 installation commanders.

For the purposes of this guidance, a military installation is a base, camp, post, station, yard, center, homeport facility for any ship, or other activity under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of a Military Department or the Secretary of Defense, including any leased facility, which is located within any State, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, the Virgin Islands, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, or Guam. In the case of an activity in a foreign country, a military installation is any area under the operational control of the Secretary of a Military Department or the Secretary of Defense, without regard to the duration of operational control.

DoD Components will comply with applicable labor relations obligations to the extent such obligations do not conflict with the agency's ability to conduct operations during this emergency.

COVID-19 is one of the deadliest threats our Nation has ever faced. As we have done throughout our history, the military will rise to this challenge. It is imperative that we do all we can to ensure the health and safety of our force, our families, and our communities so we can prevail in this fight.

Questions concerning this guidance may be directed to the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.



cc:  
Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Intelligence Oversight  
Director of Administration and Management