



COVID-19 FACE-COVERING POLICY

Updated October 1, 2020

1. **PURPOSE**

The health and safety of employees is our highest priority. By order of Governor of the state of Washington, as well as Washington State Department of Labor and Industries regulatory policy, all employees are now required to wear at a minimum, a cloth face covering or procedure masks that covers his or her chin, mouth and nose at all times, while in the workplace; unless the employee is “working alone” as defined below.

Examples of “working alone” include:

- A lone worker inside the enclosed cab of a crane or other heavy equipment, vehicle, or harvester.
- A person by themselves inside an office with 4 walls and a door.
- A lone worker inside of a cubicle with 4 walls (one with an opening for an entryway) that are high enough to block the breathing zone of anyone walking by, and whose work activity will not require anyone to come inside of the cubicle.
- A worker by themselves outside in an agricultural field, the woods, or other open area with no anticipated contact with others.

Ample supply of a variety of masks, depending on the risk status of your role, are available to staff and supply is located at various health stations across the City buildings.

This policy aligns with the State of Washington Department of Health Statewide Face Covering requirement ([Order of the Secretary of Health 20-03](#)) that took effect Friday, June 26, 2020. Masks or cloth face coverings are now required to be worn indoors and outdoor places that are open to the public. It also includes the Governor’s extension that took effect Tuesday, July 07, 2020 that no business may operate or conduct in-person business with a customer that is not wearing a face covering. The City of Des Moines is required to comply with these orders.

It is important to note that the requirement for face coverings applies to City personnel, contractors, vendors, visitors and customers while on City property. Accommodations may be offered for those who cannot wear masks.

This policy is intended to remain in effect for the duration of the face-covering requirement as issued by the Washington State Secretary of Health or other authority with jurisdiction to require compliance with this policy.

2. **DEFINITIONS**

Employers must provide cloth facial coverings to employees, unless their exposure dictates a higher level of protection. Employees may choose to wear their own facial covering at work, provided it meets the minimum requirements.

A cloth face covering is defined as:

- A sewn mask secured with ties or straps around the head or behind the ears;
- Multiple layers of fabric tied around the head;
- Made from a variety of materials, such as fleece, cotton or linen; or
- Factory-made or made from household items.

The mask should cover the nose, chin and mouth at all times. It must be secured under the chin and fit snugly against the sides of the face.

3. **REQUIREMENTS**

Workers must wear, at minimum, cloth face coverings or procedure masks whenever working with others. They must be worn when other people are present; this includes outdoors and common areas, such as hallways, mailrooms, copier rooms, stairways, and restrooms. Employees who work on their own in an enclosed space (e.g., their own office or cubicle) are permitted to remove their mask. However, they must wear their mask or face covering at all other times. Employees who are working outdoors must wear a face-covering unless they are working alone and there is no anticipation of contact with others.

4. **EXEMPTIONS**

a. **Specific Working Conditions**

Employees are not required to wear masks when:

- Eating or drinking, provided they are socially distanced at least six (6) feet away from others. A six (6) foot physical distance between staff is required during breaks.
- Working or spending time alone, as defined by Washington State Labor Industries, in a personal workspace, office, or other area on City property.
- Working or spending time alone outdoors (e.g., walking, exercising) and when there is no anticipation of contact with others.
- Operating a single occupancy vehicle.
- Teleworking (i.e., not reporting on site to a City work location.)

Employees with more comprehensive Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) guidelines, such as first responders or line workers, will continue to follow those specific guidelines.

b. **Medical or Health Risk**

Face coverings can be unsafe for some people with certain health or medical issues. Those individuals are exempted from this requirement. Employees, whose health or safety is put at risk by wearing a mask or cloth face covering, should contact the Human Resources Department. Employees may be required to provide documentation to substantiate their need for an exemption or accommodation. No individual is required to provide proof or documentation to anyone at any time about his or her health or medical status EXCEPT if requesting an exemption to the mask requirement. If you qualify for an exemption and a staff member questions you about a face covering, politely let them know you have an exemption. No more details or information is necessary.

Face coverings are *not* required when:

- A medical professional has advised that wearing a face covering may pose a health risk to the person wearing the covering or impair their breathing.
- Wearing a face covering would create a safety risk to the person as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines.
- The person is physically unable to put on or remove the face covering without assistance.
- The person has trouble breathing, is unconscious, or unable to remove the face covering without help.
- The person is deaf or hard of hearing, uses facial, and mouth movements as part of communication.
- A person is under age two (2) years of age.

5. POLICY ENFORCEMENT

Employees are expected to comply with the face-covering requirement as a condition of employment, as well as for the health and safety of themselves, their colleagues, and our local community. If an employee is without a face covering in accordance with this policy, a polite verbal request for compliance should be made to educate, encourage, and persuade individuals to wear face coverings.

Employees who do not comply should be reminded of the policy by their supervisor and provided additional education and training as needed. If, after additional education and training, an employee refuses to comply, they may be subjected to disciplinary action. If an employee states they are unable to wear a mask due to a health condition, refer the employee to the Human Resources Department. Employees with concerns that other employees are not complying with this policy should speak with their supervisor, or report it to the Human Resources Department.

a. Members of the public

The City of Des Moines Washington is mandated to require customers, clients and visitors to use face coverings. The City has a supply of disposable masks available to customers who do not have one. If you see someone without a face covering, in accordance with this policy, you should not confront them beyond a polite verbal request for compliance to educate, encourage, and persuade individuals to wear face coverings. The City does not require a customer to provide documentation or a reason if they are unable to wear a face covering. If a member of the public refuses to wear a face covering, please inform them that the City cannot provide service to them without a face covering and offer an accommodation such as online options or a scheduled appointment when physical distancing can be ensured.

6. MASK HYGIENE AND SUPPLIES

a. Hygiene

Employees will be trained on the proper use, care, storage and disposal of face coverings and PPE.

At a minimum, an employee should:

- Wash their hands before and after wearing a mask.
- Use the ties and/or loops to put the mask on and off.
- Do not touch the front of the mask.
- Wash and dry cloth masks daily and store in a clean, dry place.
- Remember that masks offer only limited protection and work best in combination with hand washing and physical distancing.

b. Supplies

The City of Des Moines has three (3) ply disposable masks, cloth masks, face shields, N-95 masks and eye goggles available to staff. Masks or additional PPE items such as face shields, shoe coverings and more can be requested through the Emergency Preparedness Manager. Ample supply of a variety of masks, depending on the risk status of your role, has been made available to staff and supply is located at various health stations across the city buildings.

Employees may request a specific mask type even if their role does not require the type of mask requested. The Emergency Preparedness Manager in conjunction with Human Resources will review these requests on a case-by-case basis.

Employees can refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for more in-depth guidance on face coverings with regard to [type and fit](#), [wearing](#), and [washing](#).

7. **RESOURCES/REFERENCES**

[Public Health- Seattle & King County Directive to Wear Face Coverings](#)

[Governor Inslee's Safe Start plan](#)

[WA State Face Covering Requirement](#)

[WA state Labor & Industries Requirements for COVID-19 Prevention in the Workplace](#)

[Overview of COVID-19 Statewide Face Covering Requirements](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Common Questions Regarding Worker Face Covering and Mask Requirements](#)