



THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
WASHINGTON DC 20350-1000

March 4, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS  
COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS  
UNDER SECRETARY OF THE NAVY (PTDO)  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY (RESEARCH,  
DEVELOPMENT AND ACQUISITION)  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY (FINANCIAL  
MANAGEMENT AND COMPTROLLER)  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY (MANPOWER AND  
RESERVE AFFAIRS)  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY (ENERGY,  
INSTALLATIONS AND ENVIRONMENT)  
GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE NAVY

SUBJECT: Use of Masks and Other Public Health Measures

Reference: (a) Secretary of Defense Memorandum, "Use of Masks and Other Public Health Measures," February 4, 2021  
(b) Secretary of the Navy Memorandum, "Use of Masks and Other Public Health Measures," February 5, 2021

Reference (a) updated Department of Defense guidance on the use of masks and other public health measures intended to curb the spread of COVID-19. Reference (b) implemented this guidance in the Department of the Navy and delegated authority to grant categorical and case-by-case exceptions to certain individuals, to include the Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandant of the Marine Corps. This memorandum serves as a supplement to reference (b) and all delegations made pursuant to reference (b) remain in effect.

The Department of the Navy is committed to ensuring the health and safety of our military members, civilian employees, contractors, and their families in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In accordance with references (a) and (b), and except as provided below, effective immediately all individuals on Department of the Navy military installations as defined in reference (a) and all individuals performing official duties on behalf of the Department of the Navy from any location other than the individual's home or place of residence, including outdoor shared spaces, will wear masks in accordance with current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance. This guidance applies to individuals who have and who have not received the COVID-19 vaccine.

In addition to the Department of Defense exceptions to mask wearing identified in reference (a), Department of the Navy exceptions include:

- (1) When necessary to reasonably accommodate participation in a religious service;

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- (2) When underlying health conditions exist that prohibit mask wearing, and the individual is in possession of medical documentation from a military or licensed civilian healthcare provider outlining the condition and the restriction it places on mask wearing;
- (3) When outdoors, including for physical fitness, and appropriate physical distancing can be maintained in accordance with CDC guidance;
- (4) When clear or unrestricted visualization of verbal communication is required for safe and effective operations (e.g. Air Traffic Control, Emergency Dispatch, Police/Fire/Emergency Services);
- (5) Children under the age of two and anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance;
- (6) Personnel conducting training in which mask wearing is not feasible, such as swim qualification, amphibious, or aquatic training events; or where mask wearing impedes safety, such as live-fire, Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN), or other high-risk training events where masks create a hazard;
- (7) Individuals alone (or with members of their household) in their housing, barracks room, private outdoor space, or personally owned vehicle;
- (8) Personnel operating machinery, tools, and/or other items during the use of which a mask would present a safety hazard.

Consistent with references (a) and (b), for areas outside of the Pentagon Reservation, I am granting authority for any additional categorical or case-by-case exceptions to the requirements for mask wearing to officials at a level no lower than a General/Flag Officer in the grade of O-7, Senior Executive Service member (or equivalent). This authority may be further delegated in writing to O-6 installation commanders, where installations do not have officials in the grade of O-7 or Senior Executive Service member (or equivalent) present.

All individuals possessing delegated exception authorities pursuant to this memorandum and reference (b) should review reference (a) and applicable CDC COVID-19 guidance as they evaluate requests for categorical and case-by-case exception requests. All exceptions granted must be in writing, tracked and maintained by the authority who granted the exception, and should include appropriate alternative safeguards whenever feasible and be consistent with the latest CDC guidance. Our imperative requirement is to ensure that the Department of the Navy can at all times produce a mission ready force to defend our nation. When making an exception decision, individuals with delegated authority must weigh the risk to mission, risk to force, risk to readiness, and impact to safety and mission accomplishment, with the risk of infection.

Individuals with delegated exception authority will coordinate their actions with mission and installation partners to ensure appropriate cross-service coordination occurs prior to any exception being granted. Commanders at a Navy-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. Conflicts should be referred to the next higher level of command for resolution. Tenants and visitors on

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other service-led joint bases should defer to installation guidance to the extent it differs from this document.

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, or Sailors wearing CBRN masks, etc.). Outdoor Shared Space is an outdoor area where physical distancing cannot be maintained due to foot traffic or co-use.

Commanders will ensure masks worn by uniformed personnel are conservative, professional, and in keeping with traditions of naval service. Any cloth item worn as a face covering should be functional, clean, consistent with CDC guidelines, and should cover the mouth and nose.

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.

This delegation does not apply to the Pentagon Reservation. The authority to grant exceptions for all Department of Defense Components located on the Pentagon Reservation is the Interim Director of Administrations and Management.

This directive will remain in effect until rescinded or modified.



Thomas W. Harker  
Acting