

COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA

Office of the Sheriff

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Laurie Smith
Sheriff

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Staff
FROM: COVID-19 Incident Command Center
SUBJECT: ICC Directive 20-46 (County Employee Face Covering Requirements)
DATE: November 10, 2020

Sheriff's Office Personnel,

On November 9, 2020, County Executive Dr. Jeff Smith sent an email to all employees to address new requirements regarding face coverings while working within County buildings. Please read the attached County Employee Face Covering Requirements Policy. It contains updated requirements related to:

(1) When to wear a face covering while working in a County facility and (2) The types of permitted face coverings.

- 1) As a general rule, everyone must wear a face covering at all times when working at a County office or other County workspace unless they are alone in a fully enclosed room that is not visited by others, such as a private office with a door.
 - Because cubicles and other open workspaces are not fully enclosed, you must wear a face covering while working in these spaces.
 - You must also wear a face covering when using a conference room, even if you are alone in the room while you use it, if it is also used by anyone else.
 - Face coverings are also required when in or passing through common spaces, like restrooms, hallways, and stairwells.
 - Congregating with coworkers to eat indoors is unsafe and not allowed. Employees who wish to eat with coworkers must do so outdoors, wear face coverings when not eating, and maintain social distancing.

Any County employee who believes they may have a medical- or disability-related reason not to be required to wear a face covering at work should contact the HIP Coordinator at (408)808-4629 to ask about the reasonable accommodation process.

- 2) Face coverings that employees wear to work at a County worksite may be either reusable cloth masks that you make or buy, or disposable surgical masks.
 - To comply with State and County Health Officer requirements, your face covering must:
 - i. Have at least two layers of material.

- ii. Fit snugly over your nose, mouth, and chin, hooking around your ears or tying behind your head. Do not wear your face covering below your nose or with the top tucked underneath your chin.
- Neck gaiters, single-layer cloth face coverings, face coverings with an exhalation valve, and face shields (without the two-layered face covering underneath) are not permitted.
- ****Sheriff's Administration will continue to allow Deputies assigned to Enforcement functions to utilize appropriate neck gaiters only when working outdoors.****

This directive and the attached Requirements Policy update portions of the following ICC directives:

20-14 (Face Coverings) - as it relates to using personal face coverings.

20-27 (Face Coverings Update) - as it relates to when and where to wear a face covering.

20-37 (Temperature Checks and Face Coverings Update) - as it relates to face coverings and where to wear them.

(See ICC Directive 20-47 relating to Face Coverings Required in State Courthouses, Amended.)

Requirement to Wear Face Coverings in County Workspaces

Both the [State Health Officer](#) and [County Health Officer](#) require people to wear face coverings that cover their nose, mouth, and chin (ideally reusable cloth masks so that supplies of medical masks are conserved for healthcare workers) most of the time when they are outside their own home, including when visiting or working at any business facility, including a government office.

The following pages on the Public Health Department's COVID-19 website provide additional information about the general face covering requirements for County employees and the public:

- <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/covid19/Pages/public-health-orders-faq.aspx#face-coverings>
- <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/covid19/Pages/learn-what-to-do.aspx#howto>

When to Wear a Face Covering While Working at a County Facility

As a general rule, everyone must wear a face covering at all times when working at a County office or other County workspace unless they are alone in a fully enclosed room that is not visited by others, such as a private office with a door.

Because **cubicles and other open workspaces** are not fully enclosed, you must wear a face covering while working in these spaces. You must also wear a face covering when using a **conference room, even if you are alone** in the room while you use it, if it is also used by anyone else. This will help protect other people who use the conference room after you're finished. Face coverings are also required when **in or passing through common spaces**, like restrooms, hallways, and stairwells.

You may remove your face covering briefly to eat and drink at work, but you must put it back on as soon as you are finished. **Congregating with coworkers to eat indoors is unsafe and not allowed.** Employees who wish to eat with coworkers must do so outdoors, wear face coverings when not eating, and maintain social distancing. Otherwise, employees should eat privately at their own workspaces.

The reason for this strict requirement is that current medical and scientific evidence shows that COVID-19 is spread mainly through respiratory droplets and aerosols. These droplets and aerosols are produced not just when an infected person speaks, coughs, or sneezes, but also when a person exhales. Droplets and aerosols may remain in the air for long periods of time in indoor spaces, transmitting the virus to other individuals who use the shared space. Properly wearing a face covering almost all the time when indoors in spaces you share with people outside your household helps to reduce the spread.

Any County employee who believes they may have a medical- or disability-related reason not to be required to wear a face covering at work should contact their supervisor or manager and ask about the reasonable accommodation process.

Face Coverings in Private Offices

If you are alone in a fully enclosed private office (meaning that the walls go all the way up to the ceiling and your door is closed), *and* the room is not regularly visited by others, then wearing a face covering is strongly encouraged, but not required.

It is safest to always wear a face covering at work, even in private offices, to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission from respiratory droplets and aerosols that may linger and spread to other people who enter the room or work nearby.

Types of Face Coverings and Face Shields

Face coverings that employees wear to work at a County worksite may be either reusable cloth masks that you make or buy, or disposable surgical masks. Wearing a reusable cloth mask is encouraged (outside of specialized settings like healthcare and jails/congregate living environments, where surgical masks or other specific personal protective equipment may be required) to conserve supplies of surgical masks for healthcare workers and other workers who need them, and to reduce waste.

To comply with State and County Health Officer requirements, your face covering must:

- Have at least two layers of material.
- **Fit snugly over your nose, mouth, and chin**, hooking around your ears or tying behind your head. **Do not wear your face covering below your nose or with the top tucked underneath your chin.**

The following categories of face coverings *do not* comply with County requirements:

- Neck gaiters and single-layer cloth face coverings, because they either fit too loosely or are too thin to offer enough protection.
- Face coverings with an exhalation valve, because they allow unfiltered air (which may contain droplets and aerosols) to be released.



Please contact your supervisor with any questions about whether a particular type of face covering complies with these requirements.

Face shields (plastic barriers that typically extend from the forehead to the chin) are not equivalent to face coverings and do not fulfill the State and County requirements to wear a face covering at work.

Face *coverings* worn tightly over the nose, mouth, and chin help prevent the wearer from spreading potentially infected respiratory droplets and aerosols to other people when the wearer talks, laughs, and exhales. Face *shields* have a different purpose, which is to protect the wearer's eyes in situations where eye protection is required (e.g., while performing medical procedures close to a patient). Based on available evidence, face shields do not offer the same protection against spread of droplets and aerosols as properly worn face coverings. Employees are certainly allowed to wear clear plastic face shields at work *over* a compliant face covering, but cannot wear a face shield *instead of* a face covering.

Any County worker who believes they may have a medical- or disability-related reason to wear an alternative type of face covering, or a face shield instead of a face covering, while at work should contact their supervisor or manager and ask about the reasonable accommodation process.