



Seattle Department of Human Resources

Kimberly Loving, Acting Director

COVID-19 Face Covering Policy for City of Seattle Executive Department Employees, Contractors/Vendors, Volunteers and Visitors to City Facilities Updated August 2, 2021

Effective Date: August 2, 2021, until changes made by CDC, DOH, L&I, PHSKC and/or WA State Governor.

Background & Policy:

In accordance with Public Health – Seattle & King County (PHSKC) [Indoor Masking Directive](#) issued on **July 26, 2021** and [mask and physical distance requirements](#) updated on **July 26, 2021**, Labor and Industries (L&I) [Requirements and Guidance for Preventing](#) COVID-19 issued on **June 30, 2021**, statewide [Indoor and Outdoor Guidance](#) effective **June 30, 2021**, the Department of Health (DOH) Secretary of Health Order 20-03 issued **June 29, 2021**, and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) issued [June 28, 2021](#) and [July 27, 2021](#), which noted “preliminary evidence suggest that fully vaccinated people who become infected with the Delta variant can spread the virus to others”, the following is the City of Seattle’s face covering policy for Executive Departments effective August 2, 2021:

Policy:

- All employees, contractors, and vendors regardless of vaccination status are required to wear face coverings when working in a City building, worksite, or vehicle unless exempted for reasons delineated below.
- All employees, contractors, and vendors regardless of vaccination status are required to wear face coverings when working outdoors where there are crowds or where six-foot distancing is not possible.
- All visitors must wear a face covering in City buildings and worksites.
- All employees may elect to wear a face covering or other protective equipment in situations when not required to be City policy (i.e., outdoors in non-crowded areas and able to socially distance) as long as doing so does not create safety issues.
- The City will provide face coverings to employees and visitors when use of face coverings is required.

Exemptions:

Specific working conditions – A face covering is not required when a City employee, contractor, or vendor is:

- Working alone – Per the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries (LNI), someone is considered to be working alone when they're isolated from interaction with other people and have little or no expectation of in-person interruption.



City of Seattle

Examples of working alone include:

- A lone worker inside the enclosed cab of a crane or other heavy equipment, vehicle, or harvester.
 - A worker by themselves outside in an agricultural field, the woods, or other open area with no anticipated contact with others.
 - In a City building, the City defines “working alone” as when an employee is by themselves in a closer door office space. If the employee is not in a closed-door office space, they must wear a mask.
- Eating or drinking.
 - Conducting tasks where federal, state, or local standards (DOSH, WISHA, OSHA, RCW, WAC, etc.) require the wearing of a specific mask, face shield, or respirator that cannot be performed while wearing a cloth face covering. Employees with more comprehensive Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) guidelines, such as first responders or line workers, will continue to follow those specific guidelines.
 - Performing tasks in which operational needs dictate otherwise, including when wearing a face covering would be impractical or unsafe. City departments have discretion to determine protocols necessary to comply with this policy while providing services to the public.

Medical or health risk – A cloth face covering is not required if:

- A medical condition or disability prevents the person from wearing or removing a face covering;
- Wearing a face covering would create a safety risk to the person as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines; or
- The person is under the age of five.

City of Seattle COVID-19 Face Covering Policy Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Updated August 2, 2021

The City of Seattle's face covering policy follows State, County, and CDC public health guidance. For more information on these public health directives, visit these sites:

- [Public Health – Seattle & King County Indoor Masking Directive](#) (July 26, 2021)
- [Public Health – Seattle & King County Masking Guidance](#) (July 26, 2021)
- [Washington State Department of Health \(DOH\) Guidance](#) (June 29, 2021)
- [Washington State Department of Labor & Industries Guidance](#) (June 30, 2021)
- [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\) Interim Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People](#) (July 28, 2021)

1. Which employees are covered under this guidance?

All employees under the Executive Branch are covered under this guidance. Those employees not covered by this guidance are the Seattle Libraries, Municipal Court, Legislative, City Attorney's Office and Seattle Housing Authority, which will be issuing their own guidance for Face Coverings for employees and visitors.

2. **[NEW]** Why is the City now requiring the use of face coverings for employees and visitors in indoor spaces?

The City is updating its policy in light of (1) Public Health–Seattle & King County's July 26, 2021 [Indoor Masking Directive](#) which directs that all individuals, regardless of vaccination status, should wear a face covering when in indoor spaces that are open to the public and (2) updated [CDC guidance](#) recommending that everyone wear a mask in indoor public settings in areas of substantial and high transmission, regardless of vaccination status. According to CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky, "High viral loads suggest an increased risk of transmission and raised concern that, unlike with other variants, vaccinated people infected with Delta can transmit the virus" (see [statement](#)). Universal masking in indoor public spaces provides an additional measure to help protect individuals not yet eligible to be vaccinated (e.g., children under 12) as well as immunocompromised individuals. Vaccines continue to be highly effective against the virus in preventing hospitalization and death from COVID-19.

3. **[Updated]** When must I wear my face covering?

All employees must wear a face covering when inside a City building or worksite, in a vehicle with other people, and outside where there are crowds or where six-foot distancing is not possible.

4. **[Updated]** Do I need to wear a face covering when I'm working alone in my cubicle?

Yes. An employee must wear a face covering when working alone in a cubicle. If the employee is working by themselves in a closed door office space, a face covering is not required.

5. What should I do if I am unable to wear a face covering?

Per Labor & Industries requirements, employees with a medical or disability issue, who are requesting accommodation, must provide their employer with an accommodation statement from their medical professional specifying that a face covering, or mask should not be worn due to their present health condition. Employers cannot allow employees to work wearing only a face shield instead of a mask because face shields have large gaps below and alongside the face; they must put in place accommodations or mitigations in addition to the face shield. Additional accommodations will be determined on a case-by-case basis with department human resources representatives. Contact your HR representative to discuss your need for an exception to the policy or a reasonable accommodation.

6. [Updated] What if I am required to wear a face covering but refuse?

The City's face covering policy is intended to help protect City employees and the people whom we serve by reducing the risk of transmission through respiratory droplets by individuals who may be asymptomatic, but still contagious. Since May 18, 2020, wearing a cloth face covering has been mandatory for all City employees, unless exempted from this policy. Employees who do not comply with this policy may be sent home on their own applicable leave and not allowed to return to work. Employees who cannot wear a mask due to a documented medical condition or sincerely held religious belief should notify HR in advance to request a reasonable accommodation, such as a mask alternative. Employees requesting a medical accommodation may be required to provide supporting documentation from a health care provider. Employees who refuse to wear a face covering for a reason other than a medical condition or sincerely held religious belief, or who refuse to wear a face covering without requesting in advance a reasonable accommodation due to a documented medical condition or sincerely held religious belief will be considered in violation of City policy and health and safety requirements and may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

7. I have recovered from COVID-19 and/or I have COVID-19 antibodies. Do I still need to wear a face covering when required by City policy?

Yes.

8. [Updated] Do vaccinated employees still need to maintain physical distancing measures if wearing a face covering?

No.



9. Do I have to tell my co-workers and/or manager what my vaccination status is?

No. You do not need to share your vaccination status with your co-workers and/or manager. To verify you are fully vaccinated, you need to fill out the City's vaccine self-attestation form at least two weeks after you receive the last dose of vaccine you received.

10. [Updated] What do I do if I am fully vaccinated but for personal preferences and/or health reasons I am choosing to continue to wear a face covering outdoors and I receive harassment from my co-workers and/or manager?

If you believe you may be experiencing discrimination or harassment around the use of face coverings, they should immediately speak to their supervisor, HR Manager, or contact the [Office of the Employee Ombud](#). Harassment of others because of their use of a face covering is unacceptable in the workplace.

11. What do I do if I am concerned that a co-worker may not be vaccinated and is not wearing a face covering when required by City policy?

You should speak to your supervisor, HR Manager, or contact the [Office of the Employee Ombud](#). You should not confront your co-worker about wearing a face covering.

12. What is the difference between a face covering, KN95, KF94, N95, and other kinds of protective masks?

- a. **Face covering:** A self-made/procured or City-provisioned mask that covers the nose, mouth, and chin, not intended for medical situations. Some face coverings may have an additional pocket for a filter insert. Cloth face coverings may be layered over a disposable mask. (Note: City-provisioned face coverings meet the City's definition of an adequate face covering with or without the filter insert.) All face coverings should comply with the City's professional workplace standards and follow [Washington State Department of Health](#) and [CDC's guidelines](#). Face coverings with exhalation valves or vents are not permitted. For more information on dos and don'ts of proper mask wearing, please visit the CDC webpage: [Improve how your mask protects you](#).
- b. **Disposable face covering:** A single-use mask that is meant to provide the same level of protection as a washable face covering and is not to be used in medical situations. Do not combine two disposable masks. **KN95:** KN95 masks are designed to filter 95% of particles entering the mask. These are manufactured in China and are China's equivalent to the N95 mask. Do not combine a KN95 with any other mask.
- c. **KF94:** KF94 masks have a 94% filtration efficacy. These masks are manufactured in South Korea and are South Korea's equivalent to the N95 mask. Do not combine a KN94 with any



other mask.

- d. **Filtering Facepiece respirators such as N95:** A National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) approved respirator that meets stricter standards for filtering airborne particles. These are intended to protect the wearer and should be reserved for medical professionals and first responders.
- e. **Procedure, surgical, or hospital mask:** A mask meant to be used by medical professionals or first responders. These may also be used by patients during patient care and are not intended for use as a general-purpose face covering.

13. How do I wear a face covering?

Guidance from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) is as follows:

- c. [Wash your hands](#) or use hand sanitizer before putting on your mask.
- d. Put the mask over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin.
- e. Check for gaps by cupping your hands around the outside edges of the mask.
- f. Make sure no air is flowing from the area near your eyes or from the sides of the mask.
- g. If the mask has a good fit, you will feel warm air come through the front of the mask and may be able to see the mask material move in and out with each breath.

14. How can I learn more about getting vaccinated?

Visit the [City's Vaccine SharePoint](#) site as well as the City's [public-facing website](#). The SharePoint site is a resource for employees with information about the COVID-19 vaccine, eligibility, availability, and self-care tips. For additional information about vaccine availability, please visit www.seattle.gov/vaccine.