

## **Wearing a Face Covering at Work**

### Employee Guidance FAQs

#### **Q.1. Am I required to wear a face covering at work?**

Yes, unless you are covered by the health exemption. The Alameda County Health Officer issued Order No. 20-08 on April 17, 2020 (“Order”) stipulating the following:

A face covering must be worn in three (3) main settings:

- Essential businesses, or other businesses and facilities engaged in Minimum basic Operations, Essential Infrastructure, or Essential Government Functions;
- When seeking health care (health care workers and facilities have a different set of requirements);
- Public transportation or other types of shared transportation.

#### **Q.2. Will the County provide me with a face covering?**

While we expect that many of you will want to wear your own face covering, the County will provide disposable face coverings at each worksite for our employees and others conducting business in County facilities to facilitate compliance with the Order. For those interested in creating your own face covering, a helpful link describing how to make and wear a face covering is provided, below, at Q.4.

#### **Q.3. If I choose to use my own face covering, what types are considered acceptable?**

An acceptable face covering is made of cloth, fabric, or other soft or permeable material, without holes, and covers the nose and mouth and surrounding areas of the lower face. As noted in the Order, examples of face coverings include: a scarf, bandana, neck gaiter, a homemade covering made from a T-shirt or sweatshirt, or towel held on with rubber bands. Use good judgment and select a face covering that is appropriate in the workplace.

#### **Q.4. Is there guidance describing how to properly wear or make cloth face coverings?**

Yes. The link below is a great resource.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>.

#### **Q.5. My understanding was that we were not required to wear a face covering before, but now we are. What changed?**

Public health officials continue to learn more about COVID-19 and share that knowledge with our community. The face covering was not previously recommended for the general public for COVID-19 protection, only for those individuals who were symptomatic to prevent them from spreading the virus. However, because individuals may be contagious and spread COVID-19 without their knowledge, even if they do not have symptoms, the prudent and cautious approach is to recommend face coverings be worn by the general population.

Wearing a face covering may ultimately help prevent the spread of droplets that may be infectious.

**Q.6. How long is this Order in place?**

Right now, there is no end date. This Order is in place until it is extended, rescinded, superseded, or amended in writing by the Health Officer.

**Q.7. I have health-related concerns with wearing a face covering. Am I still required to wear one?**

Exceptions to the requirement will be made as set forth in the Order. Per the Order, a face covering is not required if:

- a) a medical professional has advised that wearing a face covering may pose a risk to the person wearing it for health-related reasons;
- b) wearing a face covering would create a risk to the person related to their work as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines;
- c) a face covering should not be worn by someone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance.

**Q.8. Do I need to provide documentation and to whom do I present the documentation to be exempt from the Order requiring the wearing of a face covering?**

Yes. Documentation from a medical provider should be provided to your supervisor.

**Q.9. Will I be required to go home if I report to work without a face covering?**

The Order states that, "Employees, contractors, owners, and volunteers in all these settings (see Q.1 above) must wear a face covering where the public is present or likely will be, and at any time when others are nearby." [Emphasis added.] If you do not have a face covering, you will be required to wear one in order to enter the workplace where you will encounter other employees in spaces such as hallways, elevators and stairways.

**Q.10. Are members of the public required to wear a face covering?**

Yes. Per the Order, members of the public have a requirement to wear a face covering while inside of or waiting in line to enter the business, facility, or location, including government offices.

**Q.11. Am I required to wear a face covering when I am alone inside my office?**

A face covering is not required when a person is in their personal office (a single room) when others are not present as long as the public does not regularly visit the room. Further, a face covering is also not required if the employee works in a space that is not regularly visited by the public (plumber, accountant, electrician etc.), but that employee must wear

a face covering when coworkers are nearby, when being visited by a client/customer, and anywhere members of the public or other coworkers are regularly present.

**Q.12. If I wear a face covering may I discontinue the existing requirements of frequent hand-washing and maintaining social distancing of six feet?**

No. Wearing a face covering is one tool for reducing the spread of the virus but doing so is not a substitute for hand-washing and social distancing. All three practices must continue.

**Q.13. I have a face covering that covers my entire face. May I wear that to work?**

No. A covering that hides or obscures the wearer's eyes or forehead is NOT an acceptable face covering.

**Q.14. Am I required to wear a face covering when I am alone in my car driving to work?**

No. This Order does not require any person to wear a face covering while driving alone, or exclusively with other members of the same household.

**Q.15. Is there a penalty for not complying with this Order?**

Yes. Failure to comply with this Order constitutes an imminent threat and immediate menace to public health, constitutes a public nuisance, and is punishable by fine, imprisonment, or both.

**Disclaimer**

*The answers provided are based on current information and are subject to change. This includes changes, due to revisions of federal, state or local law, regulation and/or regulatory agency guidance. Please be sure to check with your Agency/Department Human Resources Office for the latest information.*