



## COVID-19 Face Covering Guidance

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) issued the following guidance for use of face coverings in MnDOT workplaces, effective July 25, 2020 and updated on October 30, 2020, June 9, 2021, and August 5, 2021. All staff and visitors are required to follow this guidance.

All MnDOT staff are required to wear a face covering according to MnDOT policy and the guidance outlined in this document. Visitors are encouraged to wear a face covering. MnDOT's [COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan](#) provides additional information on safety practices implemented in response to COVID-19.

This guidance is consistent with the [MMB Face Coverings Policy for Agency Staff](#) and guidelines issued by the [Minnesota Department of Health \(MDH\)](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#). MnDOT will update this document to reflect any changes in federal or state guidelines for face covering use.

### Background

According to the CDC, COVID-19 is primarily spread when an infected individual coughs, sneezes, or talks, resulting in respiratory droplets landing on, or being inhaled, by those nearby. Many individuals infected with COVID-19 may not display symptoms. Others may infect individuals around them prior to showing symptoms. As a result, the CDC recommends that individuals wear a face covering in public settings, specifically when maintaining physical distancing is difficult.

MnDOT's goal is to mitigate the potential for COVID-19 transmission in our workplaces and communities. The use of face coverings will contribute to the health and safety of MnDOT staff and others who work at and visit MnDOT workplaces during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Scope

This guidance applies to all MnDOT staff who work at, or visit, a MnDOT workplace or a location outside of the workplace where the staff is providing public service on behalf of the agency. This will not apply in the staff's home or for staff whose job duties require them to wear certain eye and face Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This guidance also applies to visitors and to partner agency staff co-located in those workplaces.

### Definitions

**Face covering:** An item worn on the face to help prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. This includes the following:

- paper or disposable mask, cloth face mask, scarf, bandana, neck gaiter, or religious face covering that:
  - Fits snugly against the sides of the face;

- Covers the nose and mouth completely;
  - Is secured over the nose and mouth; and
  - Allows for breathing without restriction.
- Medical-grade masks and respirators. Note: to preserve adequate supplies, their purchase and use is discouraged for staff who do not work in a health care setting or other occupations that require medical-grade protective equipment (e.g., certain construction occupations).

Masks that incorporate a valve designed for easy exhaling, mesh masks, or faces coverings with openings, holes, visible gaps in the design material, or vents are not sufficient face coverings because they allow droplets to be released. Face coverings are not considered personal protective equipment (PPE), are not appropriate substitutes for PPE, and are not intended to be used when staff need PPE for protection against exposure to occupational hazards.

**Physical distancing:** Also referred to as “social distancing,” physical distancing is keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. To practice physical distancing, stay at least six feet (approximately two arms’ lengths) from other people.

**Workplace:** For the purpose of this guidance, a MnDOT workplace includes any public service environment, office, lab, field, project trailer, or other physical location that is owned and/or controlled by MnDOT. This does not include a teleworking location.

**Public Service Environment:** A location outside of the agency workplace where the staff member is providing public service on behalf of the agency, other than in the staff member’s home. The public service environment may be indoors or outdoors.

**Staff:** Employees, officers (e.g. board members) contractors, vendors, volunteers, and interns.

## Face Covering Requirement

Employees are required to wear a face covering in the following circumstances:

- Indoors in the agency workplace or public service environment, including waiting outdoors to enter an indoor space
- Outdoors while working when it is not possible to maintain social distancing
- In vehicles being used for agency business, unless alone in a personal vehicle. See [MnDOT’s Two Person in a Vehicle Guidance](#).

When face coverings are required, they must be worn to cover the nose and mouth completely.

Staff who are required to wear face coverings may temporarily remove face coverings in indoor spaces in the workplace or public service environment in the following situations, unless doing so would violate federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, or regulations, or unless required by the property owner:

- When staff is alone, including when alone in an office, a room, a cubicle with walls that are higher than face level when physical distancing is maintained, a vehicle, the cab of heavy equipment or

machinery, or an enclosed work area. In such situations, staff must carry a face covering to be prepared for person-to-person interactions.

- When eating or drinking, provided physical distance between persons is maintained.
- During activities where the face covering will get wet.
- While communicating with an individual who is deaf or hearing impaired or has a disability, medical condition, or mental health condition that makes communication with that individual while wearing a face covering difficult, provided that at least 6 feet of physical distance between persons is maintained to the extent possible.
- When testifying or speaking in situations or settings such as news conferences, legal proceedings, governmental meetings subject to the Open Meeting Law (MS 13D), presentations, or lectures, provided that social distancing is maintained. Face shields should be considered as an alternative in these situations.
- When asked to remove a face covering to verify an identity for lawful purposes.

Staff who are required to wear face coverings must carry a face covering with them at all times in these situations, to be prepared for person-to-person interactions and to be used when no longer alone.

**Visitors and Customers:** To mitigate, to the extent reasonably possible, the transmission of respiratory droplets by agency visitors and customers who may be asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic carriers of COVID-19, visitors and customers are encouraged to wear face coverings as provided below while on agency premises.

Wearing face coverings is not a substitute for staying home when ill. Visitors and customers should stay home if they are sick or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.

## Exceptions from Face Covering Requirement

The following situations may be exceptions from the face covering requirement:

- The staff member has a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that makes it unreasonable for the staff member to maintain a face covering. This includes, but is not limited to, staff who have a medical condition that compromises their ability to breathe, and staff who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance.
  - Employees unable to wear a face covering due to a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability must request a reasonable accommodation as provided in [MnDOT's Reasonable Accommodation Policy](#).
  - Employees may request an accommodation for religious reasons by contacting the Office of Equity and Diversity.
  - Non-employee staff unable to wear a face covering due to a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability must request a reasonable modification
- Wearing a face covering would create a job hazard for the staff member or others, as determined by local, state or federal regulators or workplace safety and health standards and guidelines. Staff should report to their supervisor if they are experiencing the following:
  - The staff member's ability to safely perform their job duties is negatively affected because the use of a face covering obstructs their vision or causes safety gear or safety glasses to fog up.

- The staff member works in a setting where the face covering may increase the risk of heat-related illness or cause safety concerns due to introduction of a hazard (for instance, straps getting caught in machinery).
- Unless otherwise instructed by their agency, staff who are otherwise required to wear a face covering are not required to do so when they are working outdoors and are able to consistently maintain social distancing.
  - These staff must wear a face covering if they cannot maintain social distancing
  - These staff must wear a face covering if they are waiting outdoors to enter an indoor workplace or public service environment, or if they enter an indoor workplace or public service environment
  - Staff who are otherwise required to wear a face covering must carry a face covering with them at all times while working outdoors

## Supplies and maintenance

MnDOT will provide face coverings to all staff who are onsite at MnDOT workplaces. Staff will have access to multiple face coverings. Staff may wear their own personally provided face covering as long as it meets the criteria, however MnDOT strongly encourages staff to use the provided face coverings to ensure effectiveness. MnDOT will also maintain an inventory of face coverings to provide to visitors, as needed.

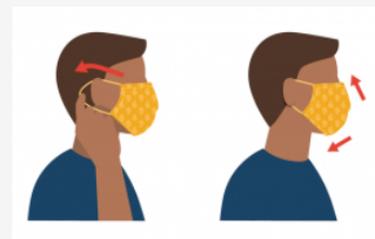
Staff should contact their supervisor if a face covering is needed. The staff's supervisor will coordinate with the staff in providing a face cover. Supplies of face coverings should be maintained within MnDOT workplaces.

## How to Wear a Face Covering

MnDOT staff should review [CDC Guidance on How to Wear a Face Covering](#), including the basic overview below. The Minnesota Department of Health has provided a video training "[How to Safely Wear Your Mask](#)" and "[Tips for Wearing a Mask.](#)"

### Wear your Face Covering Correctly

- Wash your hands before putting on your face covering
- Put it over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin
- Try to fit it snugly against the sides of your face
- Make sure you can breathe easily



## How to Clean a Face Covering

Staff are responsible for washing reusable face coverings. Staff should review the [CDC Guidance on How to Wash Face Coverings](#).

## Communication and management

### Communications

MnDOT will post signage in our workplaces clearly stating the use of face coverings, physical distancing and other preventative measures. MnDOT is responsible for communicating the use of face coverings to all individuals working in, and visiting, MnDOT workplaces.

### Safety Observations

The District Safety Administrator's safety observations now include COVID-19 safe work practices.

### Consequences of Failing to Wear a Face Covering When Required

Employees who fail to wear a face covering in the workplace or public service environment as required may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge. Staff who fail to wear a face covering when required also may be sent home and placed in no-pay status.

Non-employee staff (officers, contractors, vendors, volunteers, interns) may be subject to action up to and including termination of their relationship with MnDOT.

If staff has concerns about others not using face coverings, they should talk to their supervisor and/or human resources privately.

Staff must continue to follow [MMB HR/LR Policy #1432 Respectful Workplace](#) and shall not engage in harassing, discriminatory, or retaliatory behavior towards others based on face coverings use. Failure to comply with the policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. If an employee is aware of another employee violating the Respectful Workplace Policy, the employee should contact their local HR office for review and guidance.

### Additional Information

MnDOT's guidance on face coverings may be updated if regulatory or health advisory recommendations change. For additional information on workplace safety measures, review MnDOT's COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan on the [COVID-19 SharePoint site](#).