



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

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MAR 17 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: Force Health Protection Guidance (Supplement 17) – Department of Defense Guidance for the Use of Masks, Personal Protective Equipment, and Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic

- References: (a) Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Memorandum, “Force Health Protection Guidance (Supplement 7) – Department of Defense Guidance for the Use of Cloth Face Coverings, Personal Protective Equipment, and Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Outbreak,” April 8, 2020 (hereby rescinded and replaced)
- (b) Secretary of Defense Memorandum, “Use of Masks and Other Public Health Measures,” February 4, 2021
- (c) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Order, “Requirement for Persons to Wear Masks While on Conveyances and at Transportation Hubs,” January 29, 2021

This memorandum rescinds and replaces reference (a) and supplements reference (b) with updated guidance on the use of face coverings (“masks”) in conjunction with other public health measures, including non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs), and reiterates guidance on use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Masks:

Masks must be worn by DoD personnel in accordance with reference (b), and must conform to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines. Specific CDC guidelines on how to wear a mask correctly and different types of masks for different situations or circumstances may be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/types-of-masks.html>, and <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/mask-fit-and-filtration.html>. Cloth masks should be laundered regularly to maintain good hygiene. The Military Departments will issue guidance on uniform wear for Service members. Local commanders may elect to establish more stringent guidelines for wearing masks, as necessary, to respect host nation or local jurisdiction guidelines.

CDC requires the wearing of masks when traveling on conveyances, including military conveyances, into and within the United States and at transportation hubs (reference (c)). This requirement is extended to DoD transportation assets and hubs, including those outside of the United States.

Officials authorized by reference (b) may grant categorical or case-by-case exceptions to these requirements in writing for Service members and their families in environments other than office spaces that are necessary for military readiness, that are related to living on a military installation, or that are related to mask wearing by children (so long as such exceptions are consistent with CDC guidelines for mask wearing by children). Officials authorized by reference (b) also may grant exceptions in writing for other situations outside of office settings when temporary unmasking is necessary for mission requirements. Exceptions granted should include direction to apply alternative safeguards to the extent possible, such as additional physical distancing or reduced occupancy, or other such measures.

The wearing of masks does not remove the requirements to maintain physical distancing or practice any other public health measures and NPIs, per reference (b). The requirements for mask wearing and physical distancing apply to those who have been vaccinated against coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) per CDC guidance.

PPE:

Medical PPE items, such as N95 respirators, are reserved for use in specific circumstances, and should not be issued outside of these circumstances unless local commanders determine they are necessary to respect host nation or local jurisdiction guidelines. In those instances, commanders, in consultation with public health specialists, legal counsel, and with consideration of national or local jurisdictional agreements, such as Status of Forces Agreements, will determine if medical PPE items will be issued to non-medical personnel to meet these requirements. The PPE supply must be optimized and the below guidelines should be followed, in addition to consulting CDC-published strategies found at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/index.html>.

- Respirators, including N95 respirators. These items are not recommended for use outside of healthcare settings, discrete COVID-19 support missions, and other specifically authorized settings. N95 respirators must be fit-tested on the user to provide optimal protection.
- Surgical Masks. These items are intended to reduce the spread of viruses when worn by patients and healthcare workers.
- Gloves, gowns, and eye protection. These items should be used primarily for patient care (e.g., en-route care during patient transport). Between patient encounters, non-disposable eye protection must be cleaned and disinfected, and gloves and gowns must be changed at prescribed intervals.

The below table prescribes prioritized categories for PPE use, subject to available supply and direction from local commanders and supervisors.

Priority	Category	Examples	Measures
1	Source control	A COVID-19 patient or person under investigation (PUI)	Surgical Masks or Other Masks
2	Healthcare delivery	Military Medical Treatment Facility Patient Care Requirements Emergency Medical Services Ancillary Healthcare Providers (e.g., Dental, Veterinary)	N95 Respirators/ Surgical Masks Eye Protection Gowns Gloves
3	Discrete COVID-19 support missions	COVID-19 Patient or PUI Transport Quarantine and PUI Support Mortuary Affairs Teams	N95 Respirators/ Surgical Masks Eye Protection Gowns Gloves
4	Increased risk in performance of official duties	Commanders, in consultation with their Public Health Emergency Officers, may include special public-facing duties and incorporate CDC considerations for other special groups.	Gloves Masks

NPIs:

Face coverings and PPE use are part of a larger strategy for using NPIs to limit transmission of COVID-19. Further CDC information on NPIs may be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>. It is important to practice NPI measures consistently, including but not limited to the following:

- Physical distancing (6 feet or more);
- Frequent hand sanitation using soap and water or hand sanitizer;
- Properly covering coughs and sneezes;
- Staying at home when sick (“not feeling right,” or “start of a cold or allergies,” etc);
- Use of telecommunications in place of face-to-face interactions; and
- Frequently cleaning and disinfecting common touch points, including gym equipment, keyboards, laptops, door handles, etc.

This memorandum and other COVID-19 guidance memoranda are centrally located at: <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/Spotlight/Coronavirus/Latest-DOD-Guidance/>. My point of contact for this guidance is COL Jennifer M. Kishimori, who may be reached at (703) 681-8179 or jennifer.m.kishimori.mil@mail.mil.

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