

Background Information: On July 13, 2020, the State of Wisconsin required all employees to wear face masks while in state facilities. On July 30, 2020, Governor Evers declared a [Public Health Emergency](#) and issued an [Emergency Order](#) requiring individuals to wear face coverings when indoors and in enclosed areas, and not in a private residence, with some exceptions as clarified and defined in the order. The order is effective at 12:01 a.m. on Saturday, August 1, 2020, and will expire on September 28, 2020 or by a subsequent superseding order. This FAQ document has been updated to address questions in preparation for implementation of the Emergency Order.

1. Why are face masks required in state facilities?

Cloth face coverings (or face masks) are recommended by the CDC and DHS Public Health as a simple barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the cloth face covering coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice.

Returning more staff to the workforce, increased interaction with the public, the limited ability to ensure necessary space between employees at all times, and the increasing community transmission rates throughout Wisconsin all factored into the decision to require masks. Masks are a critical measure in slowing and preventing the spread of COVID-19 virus.

2. Do I need to wear a mask indoors even if I can physical distance at all times?

Yes, masks are required at all times to help control the spread of COVID-19 within the worksite and the communities in which we live.

3. If I already had COVID-19 or tested negative do I have to wear a mask?

Yes. Everyone must wear a face mask.

4. Where do I get a face mask?

Each agency has a supply of face masks available for employees. You may wear your own work appropriate mask if you prefer.

5. Is a space that has some open walls considered an outdoor space?

No, a space must be completely open on all sides to be outdoors. Opening windows does not create an outdoor space.

6. If I am alone in an enclosed office with a door do I need to wear a mask?

Effective 7/31/2020 employees are not required to wear a mask while alone in an enclosed office. Employees are reminded to wipe down surfaces with available disinfectant spray before leaving for the day and to mask up if others enter the office.

7. How do I wear a mask while I'm eating or drinking?

Employees are permitted to remove masks while eating and drinking but should wear them when retrieving food from the refrigerator, vending machine, reheating or otherwise preparing food.

8. I am not able to wear a mask due to a medical condition, mental health reason, or disability. What should I do?

Employees who are unable to wear a mask due to a medical or mental health condition, or disability, should contact their human resources representative (e.g., medical, or reasonable accommodation coordinator) to complete a reasonable accommodation request.

9. I am not able to wear a mask for medical condition, mental health reason, or disability. Do I need medical documentation about why I cannot wear a mask?

Not necessarily. Employees should talk to human resources and follow the reasonable accommodation process. Employees who need to provide medical documentation will be advised during that process.

10. I am not able to wear a mask based on a religious belief. What should I do?

Employees who are unable to wear a mask based on a religious belief should contact their human resources representative to discuss accommodation. Employees may be required to submit documentation for management to review an accommodation request based on a religious belief.

11. Can I wear a face shield instead of a face mask?

No. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), it is not known if face shields provide protection to others from the spray of respiratory particles. CDC does not recommend use of face shields for normal everyday activities or as a substitute for cloth face coverings.

However, a face shield may be permitted for staff who have difficulty breathing through a mask or have received guidance from a medical provider. In this instance, the employee should discuss their concerns with human resources.

12. Communication is an essential part of my job and I'm concerned that if I can't communicate clearly because of the face covering then I will not have effectively done my job. What should I do?

While all employees communicate on a regular basis, there are some instances when the effectiveness of the communication could be affected by wearing a mask. Employees may remove their mask in this instance when at least six feet from the other person and where other alternatives will not work, e.g. written communication, etc. Masks may also be removed to improve communication with others who rely on lip-reading, etc. for communication. Employees may also wish to consider a clear mask to assist with communication issues.

There may be other instances when a face mask may impede in one's ability to effectively do one's job. If you have such concerns, we encourage you to consult with your supervisor or human resources.

13. My goggles or glasses fog up when I wear a mask. What can I do?

[Here are some tips.](#)

14. What do I do if I see someone not wearing a mask, even though they should be?

Nothing. Some people have conditions or circumstances that would make wearing a cloth face covering difficult or dangerous. Just wear your mask and stay six feet away. If you remain concerned, you can talk to your supervisor or human resources.

15. Are there any other exceptions to the mask requirement?

Employees who work in a setting where cloth face coverings may increase the risk of [heat-related illness](#) or cause safety concerns due to introduction of a hazard (for instance, straps getting caught in equipment) may consult with an occupational safety and health professional to determine the appropriate face covering for their setting.

16. My job is indoors and outdoors, what should I do?

Employees are required to wear masks when indoors but may remove the mask when outdoors and when social distancing is possible.

17. If I participate in the state's van pool (ride share), do I need to wear a mask while in the vehicle?

Yes, you must wear a mask.

18. If a member of the public is not wearing a mask, can I deny them service?

No, although members of the public are encouraged to wear a mask, the State will not deny service for this reason. Masks will be available to members of the public doing business with the State. *(Note: Effective August 1, the Emergency Order requiring*

masks is implemented throughout Wisconsin. The Order supersedes local guidance, which is less restrictive, however, local guidance may be more restrictive than the Order.)

19. If I cannot deny service to a member of the public without a mask, can I ask them to wear a mask or to explain why they are not wearing a mask?

Employees may not ask or require members of the public to wear a mask. Additionally, employees may not ask members of the public if they meet the exception criteria or require them to explain why they are not wearing a mask. State employees are not responsible for compliance or enforcement of the Emergency Order and will respect individuals' privacy, which may include medical information or personal history. As a reminder, employees should similarly not be making these inquiries of their co-workers.

20. I work in a position where I interact directly with the public and although I am wearing a mask, I am concerned about interacting with a member of the public or a co-worker who is not wearing a mask. What should I do?

Masks help to protect both the person wearing the mask as well as anyone they interact with. If you encounter someone who is not wearing a mask, maintain social distancing and stay behind protective barriers (plastic shields/windows/etc.) where possible. You can also talk to your supervisor or human resources about additional options or additional personal protective equipment.

21. Following the requirement for masks in state facilities, I was approved through the reasonable accommodation process to wear a modified face mask (e.g. vented, etc.), face shield, no mask, etc. Does Emergency Order #1 change this approval or require me to submit a new request?

No, previously approved requests remain in effect and no additional requests or information is needed.

22. Can I still submit a reasonable accommodation request after Emergency Order #1 is in effect?

Yes, the reasonable accommodation process is still in place without change.

23. Is it true that I could be subject to discipline for refusing to wear a mask if I do not have an approved reasonable accommodation?

Yes, as is true for any required protective equipment, employees who refuse to wear a mask without authorization to do so may be subject to discipline up to and including termination. While we will make every effort to work with the personal circumstances of each employee, this has been a requirement in some workspaces for several months and became a requirement for all employees effective July 13, 2020.

24. Are employees required to wear masks once the Emergency Order expires?

The mask requirement implemented on July 13th is a protective measure to help ensure the health and safety of our workforce and the members of the public to whom we provide service. It is possible that masks will be required beyond the expiration of the Emergency Order. Mask requirements will remain until it is determined to be a measure no longer needed to help protect the health and safety of our workforce. Employees will be notified of this change.