

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Transportation Security Administration
6595 Springfield Center Drive
Springfield, Virginia 20598



**Transportation
Security
Administration**

MEMORANDUM

To: Covered Airport Operators

Date: January 31, 2021

Subject: Security Directive 1542-21-01

Attached to this memorandum is Security Directive (SD) 1542-21-01: Security Measures – Face Mask Requirements. This SD is issued to implement the January 21, 2021, Executive Order on promoting measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) by travelers within the United States and those who enter the country from abroad. This SD also supports enforcement of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Order mandating masks issued on January 29, 2021.

All queries concerning the attached SD must be directed to your assigned TSA Federal Security Director.



Darby LaJoye
Senior Official Performing the Duties of the TSA Administrator

Attachment:
Security Directive 1542-21-01



SECURITY DIRECTIVE

NUMBER SD 1542-21-01

SUBJECT Security Measures – Mask Requirements

EFFECTIVE DATE 11:59 pm EST on February 1, 2021

EXPIRATION DATE May 11, 2021

CANCELS AND SUPERSEDES Not Applicable

APPLICABILITY Airport operators regulated under 49 CFR 1542.103 and airlines that have exclusive area agreements under 49 CFR 1542.111

AUTHORITY 49 U.S.C. 114 and 44903; 49 CFR 1542.303

LOCATION Airports within the United States

PURPOSE AND GENERAL INFORMATION

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and to reduce the spread of the virus, the President issued an Executive Order, *Promoting COVID-19 Safety in Domestic and International Travel*, on January 21, 2021, requiring masks to be worn in airports, on commercial aircraft, and in various modes of surface transportation. On January 27, 2021, the Acting Secretary of Homeland Security determined a national emergency existed requiring the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to issue this Security Directive (SD) to implement the Executive Order and enforce the related Order¹ issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), pursuant to the authority of 49 U.S.C. sections 114 and 44903. Consistent with these mandates and TSA's authority, TSA is issuing this SD requiring masks to be worn to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 during air travel. TSA developed these requirements in consultation with the Federal Aviation Administration and CDC.

¹ See Order Under Section 361 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 264) and 42 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §§ 70.2, 71.31(B), 71.32(B); Requirement for Persons to Wear Masks While on Conveyances and at Transportation Hubs (January 29, 2021)

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this SD, the following definitions apply:

Conveyance has the same definition as under 42 CFR 70.1, meaning “an aircraft, train, road vehicle, vessel...or other means of transport, including military.”

Mask means a material covering the nose and mouth of the wearer, excluding face shields.²

ACTIONS REQUIRED

Except at locations under the control of an aircraft operator, foreign air carrier, or a federal government agency or their contractors, the airport operator must apply the following measures:

- A. The airport operator must make best efforts to provide individuals with prominent and adequate notice of the mask requirements to facilitate awareness and compliance.³ This notice must also inform individuals of the following:
 - 1. Federal law requires wearing a mask at all times in and on the airport and failure to comply may result in removal and denial of re-entry.
 - 2. Refusing to wear a mask in or on the airport is a violation of federal law; individuals may be subject to penalties under federal law.
- B. The airport operator must require that individuals in or on the airport wear a mask, except as described in Sections D., E., and F.
 - 1. If individuals are not wearing masks, ask them to put a mask on.
 - 2. If individuals refuse to wear a mask in or on the airport, escort them from the airport.
- C. The airport operator must ensure direct employees, authorized representatives, tenants, and vendors wear a mask at all times in or on the airport, except as described in Sections D., E., and F.
- D. The requirement to wear a mask does not apply under the following circumstances:
 - 1. When necessary to temporarily remove the mask for identity verification purposes.

² A properly worn mask completely covers the nose and mouth of the wearer. A mask should be secured to the head, including with ties or ear loops. A mask should fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face. Masks do not include face shields. Masks can be either manufactured or homemade and should be a solid piece of material without slits, exhalation valves, or punctures. Medical masks and N-95 respirators fulfill the requirements of this SD. CDC guidance for attributes of acceptable masks in the context of this SD is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/masks/mask-travel-guidance.html>.

³ Notice may include, if feasible, advance notifications on digital platforms, such as on apps, websites, or email; posted signage in multiple languages with illustrations; or other methods as appropriate.

2. While eating, drinking, or taking oral medications for brief periods.⁴ Prolonged periods of mask removal are not permitted for eating or drinking; the mask must be worn between bites and sips.
 3. While communicating with a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, when the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.
 4. If unconscious (for reasons other than sleeping), incapacitated, unable to be awakened, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.⁵
- E. The following conveyances are exempted from this SD:
1. Persons in private conveyances operated solely for personal, non-commercial use.
 2. A driver, when operating a commercial motor vehicle as this term is defined in 49 CFR 390.5, if the driver is the sole occupant of the vehicle.
- F. This SD exempts the following categories of persons from wearing masks:⁶
1. Children under the age of 2.
 2. People with disabilities who cannot wear a mask, or cannot safely wear a mask, because of the disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.).⁷
 3. People for whom wearing a mask would create a risk to workplace health, safety, or job duty as determined by the relevant workplace safety guidelines or federal regulations.

⁴ The CDC has stated that brief periods of close contact without a mask should not exceed 15 minutes. *See* <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/public-health-recommendations.html>

⁵ Persons who are experiencing difficulty breathing or shortness of breath or are feeling winded may remove the mask temporarily until able to resume normal breathing with the mask. Persons who are vomiting should remove the mask until vomiting ceases. Persons with acute illness may remove the mask if it interferes with necessary medical care such as supplemental oxygen administered via an oxygen mask.

⁶ Airport operators may impose requirements, or conditions of carriage, on persons requesting an exemption from the requirement to wear a mask, including medical consultation by a third party, medical documentation by a licensed medical provider, and/or other information as determined by the airport operator, as well as require evidence that the person does not have COVID-19 such as a negative result from a SAR-CoV-2 viral test or documentation of recovery from COVID-19. CDC definitions for SAR-CoV-2 viral test and documentation of recovery are available in Frequently Asked Questions at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/testing-international-air-travelers.html>. Airport operators may also impose additional protective measures that improve the ability of a person eligible for exemption to maintain social distance (separation from others by 6 feet), such as scheduling travel at less crowded times or on less crowded conveyances, or seating or otherwise situating the individual in a less crowded section of the conveyance or airport. Airport operators may further require that persons seeking exemption from the requirement to wear a mask request an accommodation in advance.

⁷ This is a narrow exception that includes a person with a disability who cannot wear a mask for reasons related to the disability; who, e.g., do not understand how to remove their mask due to cognitive impairment, cannot remove a mask on their own due to dexterity/mobility impairments, or cannot communicate promptly to ask someone else to remove their mask due to speech impairments or language disorders, or cannot wear a mask because doing so would impede the function of assistive devices/technology. It is not meant to cover persons for whom mask-wearing may only be difficult. CDC intends to issue further guidance regarding this exception.

- G. If an individual refuses to comply with mask requirements, follow incident reporting procedures in accordance with the Airport Security Program and provide the following information, if available:
1. Date and airport code;
 2. Individual's full name and contact information;
 3. Name and contact information for any direct airport employees or authorized representatives involved in the incident; and
 4. The circumstances related to the refusal to comply.

PREEMPTION

The requirements in this SD do not preempt any State, local, Tribal, or territorial rule, regulation, order, or standard necessary to eliminate or reduce a local safety hazard, which includes public health measures that are the same or more protective of public health than those required in this SD, if that provision is not incompatible with this SD.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT

The airport operator must immediately provide written confirmation of receipt of this SD to the Federal Security Director (FSD).

DISSEMINATION REQUIRED

The airport operator must immediately pass the information and measures set forth in this SD to any personnel having responsibilities in implementing the provisions of this directive. The airport operator may share this SD with anyone subject to the provisions of this directive to include but not limited to: federal, state, and local government personnel; direct airport employees or authorized representatives; vendors; tenants; exclusive area agreement holders; contractors; transport personnel; taxi drivers; law enforcement; etc.

APPROVAL OF ALTERNATIVE MEASURES

The operator must immediately notify the FSD whenever any action required by this SD or a TSA-approved alternative measure cannot be carried out. In accordance with 49 CFR 1542.303(d), the airport operator may submit proposed alternative measures and the basis for submitting those measures in writing to the Assistant Administrator for Policy, Plans, and Engagement through the FSD.


Darby LaJoye
Senior Official Performing the Duties of the TSA Administrator