



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

2/2/2021

Memorandum

To: Regional Directors
Superintendents

From: Deputy Director, Operations
Exercising the delegated Authority of the Director, National Park Service

Subject: Implementing and Enforcing Mask-Wearing Requirements for Park Visitors

Purpose

On January 20, 2021, the President signed [Executive Order 13991, Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing](#) (E.O. 13991). E.O. 13991 directs federal agencies to:

... immediately take action, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law, to require compliance with [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] guidelines with respect to wearing masks, maintaining physical distance, and other public health measures by: on-duty or on-site Federal employees; on-site Federal contractors; and all persons in Federal buildings or on Federal lands.

This Memorandum provides guidance to superintendents about how to implement and enforce mask-wearing requirements for park visitors.

Background

Administration Priorities.

As stated in E.O. 13991, it is the policy of the Administration to halt the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) by relying on the best available data and science-based public health measures. Such measures include wearing masks when around others, physical distancing, and other related precautions recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

On January 24, 2021, the Office of Management and Budget issued [M-21-15, COVID-19 Safe Federal Workplace: Agency Model Safety Principles](#) to provide guidance to federal agencies on implementing E.O. 13991. M-21-15 contains model safety principles that apply CDC guidelines related to mask-wearing and physical distancing to the federal workplace and are designed to be used by federal agencies as a starting point for updating their COVID-19 workplace safety plans. The guidance for superintendents in this Memorandum draws upon these principles to help ensure that visitors to the National Park System do not threaten the health and safety of NPS employees, volunteers, partners and contractors, or other park visitors.

On January 29, 2021, the Acting Secretary of the Interior issued a memorandum entitled [Protecting Our Workforce by Requiring Mask-Wearing](#). This memorandum reaffirmed the Administration's commitment to an urgent, robust, and professional response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Memorandum requires all onsite employees, contractors, and volunteers to wear a mask or face covering at all times while in Department buildings or on federal public lands when physical distancing of 6 feet or more is not possible.

CDC Guidance on Mask-Wearing.

The CDC has issued [detailed considerations for wearing masks](#). Superintendents are encouraged to share this guidance with staff and visitors and use it in support of compendium actions taken to implement and enforce mask-wearing requirements for park visitors. Some of these considerations are summarized below.

- In addition to physical distancing and hand washing, masks are a critical step to help prevent people from getting and spreading COVID-19. When you wear a mask, you protect others as well as yourself.
- COVID-19 spreads mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets. Masks are a simple barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from reaching others.
- Masks can prevent the spread of the disease even when the wearer is not sick. This is because several studies have found that people with COVID-19 who never develop symptoms (asymptomatic) and those who are not yet showing symptoms (pre-symptomatic) can still spread the virus to other people.
- Masks may not be necessary when you are outside by yourself away from others, or with other people who live in your household.
- It is especially important to wear a mask indoors with people you do not live with and when you are unable to stay at least 6 feet apart because COVID-19 spreads mainly among people who are in close contact with one another.
- Recommended masks include non-medical disposable masks, masks that fit properly (cover nose and mouth and fit snugly around the nose and chin with no large gaps around the sides of the face), masks made with breathable fabric (such as cotton), masks made with tightly woven fabric (i.e., fabrics that do not let light pass through when held up to a light source), masks with two or three layers, and masks with inner filter pockets. Novelty/non-protective masks, masks with ventilation valves, or face shields are not a substitute for the recommended masks.

Guidance for Superintendents

Compendium Actions.

In order to protect the health and safety of NPS employees, volunteers, partners and contractors,

and park visitors, superintendents must implement mask-wearing requirements for park visitors, using the authority in [36 CFR 1.5\(a\)\(2\)](#). This authority allows superintendents to impose restrictions on activities within park areas for the maintenance of public health and safety.

Superintendents must use the following language in their park's compendium for this purpose:

Individuals over the age of two years must wear masks, except when actively eating or drinking, in the following locations:

1. All common areas and shared workspaces in buildings owned, rented or leased by the National Park Service, including, but not limited to, park visitor centers, administrative offices, lodges, gift shops and restaurants.
2. The following outdoor areas, when others are present, where the superintendent has determined that physical distancing (staying at least six feet apart) cannot reasonably be maintained:
 - [e.g., outdoor areas adjacent to visitor centers]
 - [e.g., parking lots and common areas in campgrounds]
 - [e.g., crowded trails, viewpoints, and other areas of interest]
 - [e.g., covered structures that attract crowds such as memorials and open-air pavilions]

Masks must cover the nose and mouth and fit snugly around the nose and chin with no large gaps around the sides of the face. Masks not designed to be protective, masks with ventilation valves, and face shields do not meet the requirement.

If a park has indoor locations where visitors are allowed but does not have any outdoor locations where physical distancing cannot be maintained, item 2 from the model compendium language may be omitted.

Compendium actions requiring visitors to wear masks must be justified in a written determination that is made available to the public upon request. These written determinations may be placed in the compendium immediately after the action. Superintendents are encouraged to use the information contained in the Background section of this memorandum to support their compendium actions, along with specific reasons why physical distancing is not possible under normal circumstances in the designated outdoor locations.

Superintendents must notify the public of all indoor locations and outdoor areas where visitors are required to wear masks. Methods of notification may include signs posted in conspicuous locations, maps, park brochures, and information posted online.

Permitted Events and Activities.

Superintendents must include mask-wearing requirements in the terms and conditions of permits for events or activities that will take place inside or in outdoor areas where physical distancing (staying at least six feet apart) cannot be reasonably maintained. These terms and conditions must include the same requirements about the proper fitting and type of masks that are included above in the model compendium language.

Enforcement.

Violations of compendium actions are prohibited under [36 CFR 1.5\(f\)](#). Violations of the terms and conditions of permits are prohibited under [36 CFR 1.6\(g\)\(2\)](#) and may result in the suspension or revocation of the permit. Although violations of mask-wearing requirements could therefore result in criminal penalties, law enforcement personnel should be mindful of the guidance in [Reference Manual 9 – Law Enforcement Program](#) when enforcing these requirements:

In carrying out their law enforcement duties, the NPS requires that its commissioned personnel exercise sound judgment and discretion, striving to maintain the sensitivity called for in achieving the overall goal of professional resource and visitor protection consistent with the NPS mission. Significant efforts should be directed at safeguarding human life and the protection of natural and cultural resources. NPS law enforcement programs shall promote education and deterrence, as well as professional and effective investigation, apprehension, and prosecution.

CDC guidance recognizes that masks should not be worn by children under age two or anyone who has trouble breathing. Wearing masks may be difficult for some people with sensory, cognitive, or behavioral issues. If a visitor is unable to wear a mask properly or cannot tolerate a mask, they should not wear one and may be asked to leave any location where masks are required to be worn. Visitors may be asked to lower their masks briefly for identification purposes in compliance with safety and security requirements.