



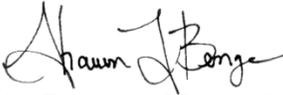
United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

5/19/21

Memorandum

To: Regional Directors
Associate and Assistant Directors
Superintendents

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

Subject: Updating Mask-Wearing Requirements

In a February 2, 2021, memorandum entitled [“Implementing and Enforcing Mask-Wearing Requirements for Park Visitors”](#) (Memorandum) guidance was provided to superintendents on implementing and enforcing mask-wearing requirements for park visitors. In order to protect the health and safety of NPS employees, volunteers, partners and contractors, and park visitors, the Memorandum required superintendents to 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.

On May 13, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued [Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People](#). The Department of the Interior’s current COVID-19 policy incorporates CDC guidance. The latest CDC guidance states:

Fully vaccinated people no longer need to wear a mask or physically distance in any setting, except where required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance.

This memorandum provides direction to superintendents that reflects the most recent CDC and departmental guidance on mask wearing.

Park Compendia Updates

As soon as practicable, superintendents must amend their compendium language with respect to masks to read as follows:

All individuals over the age of two who are not yet fully vaccinated 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.

Regardless of vaccination status, all individuals must comply with all orders regarding masks issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

CDC prevention measures continue to apply to all travelers on public transit, regardless of vaccination status. Masks remain required on all forms of public transit that operate within parks, including busses, trains, and boats/ferries, and in transportation hubs.

Park staff should not ask visitors whether or not they have been vaccinated. Absent evidence to the contrary, park staff should operate as though non-masked visitors are fully vaccinated.

Superintendents may no longer include in special use permits, commercial use authorizations, concession contracts or operating plans, or leases a term or condition that would require vaccinated individuals to wear masks. In locations described in sections 1 and 2 of the park compendium language prescribed above, superintendents should continue to require individuals who are not yet fully vaccinated to wear masks.

Application Of Mask Guidance to Employees

Employees who are not yet fully vaccinated must continue to wear masks in federal buildings and on federal lands when physical distancing cannot be maintained. Managers should not ask employees whether or not they have been vaccinated.

The department has been clear that while the DOI posture on masks has changed, other aspects of the pandemic response remain in place. The department continues to authorize maximum workplace flexibilities such as telework and flexible work schedules in order to keep office employee densities low. It is presently not known how much longer these workplace flexibilities will remain in place.

Operating Status Decisions

This change in mask posture to follow CDC guidance may necessitate changes in some aspects of park operations. As has been the practice throughout the pandemic, superintendents and building managers should use the [NPS Risk Assessment Tool and decision form](#) to evaluate risks associated with changing park operations during the pandemic. Changes in pandemic guidance, increases in local or national vaccination rates, and changes in local or national community transmission rates are all factors that parks

may consider in their risk analyses as they implement this new guidance.

Exceptions to Following CDC Guidance

While agencies of the Federal government are implementing this new guidance from the CDC, some states, localities, territories, and federally recognized Indian tribes (nonfederal jurisdictions) may be maintaining a mask-wearing requirement for fully vaccinated individuals. Many parks are located in nonfederal jurisdictions that continue to require masks for all individuals in buildings and/or outdoors when physical distance cannot be maintained. In general, NPS facilities will be expected to follow the CDC's guidance that masks are not required for fully vaccinated individuals. However, in parks where this posture is at odds with mandates imposed by relevant nonfederal jurisdictions, parks or regions may request to follow those nonfederal masking mandates.

If a park or office is located within a jurisdiction that maintains a masking mandate and if the park or office seeks to follow or adopt the requirements of that jurisdiction, then the park or office must submit a request to its region, which will review the request and forward it to the Office of the Director. Requests by parks or offices to align their mask requirements with current state or local nonfederal mandates must be submitted to the Office of the Director no later than May 27. If a jurisdiction imposes a new more restrictive mask mandate, requests should be made within one week of the issuance of the new mandate. Regions should submit a memorandum with well-reasoned justifications to Chief_of_Staff@nps.gov for consideration. Where practicable, regions should submit requests for whole jurisdictions (states, territories, tribal reservations) rather than on a park-by-park basis.

Parks in jurisdictions with nonfederal masking mandates that intend to seek approval to align with those mask requirements should delay implementation of the masking posture changes outlined in this memorandum pending a final decision on their request.

Concession Operators and Partners

The revised masking requirement described in this memorandum and in the revised compendium language applies to concessioners, commercial use authorization holders, lessees with public-facing business operations, and other partners operating in units of the National Park System and serves as a required baseline for their operations. Any of those entities may, however, make an independent business decision to institute a masking requirement for its customers or employees that is more stringent than the Federal requirement.

Communications and Signs

Additionally, communications guidance, including updated signs from Harpers Ferry Center, is available in the Coronavirus Response area of [InsideNPS](#).