

MASK ORDER FAQ

What does this mean for me as a business owner?

Business owners who work in commercial entities that directly serve the public – restaurants, retail shops, auto repair, hotels, clinics, charter fishing, etc. – are required to develop and implement a Health and Safety policy requiring customers over the age of 10 and employees to wear masks when they cannot appropriately social distance at a space of at least six feet separation.

How do I form a health and safety policy?

These will look different for each type of business. At a minimum, the policy must address face coverings for employees and customers over the age of 10, requiring that all visitors and employees on the business premises wear face coverings when in an area or performing an activity which will necessarily involve close contact and six feet of separation is not feasible.

This policy should be visible in the place of business to employees and customers. It could be on the door, or on your front counter. Failure to develop and implement the Health and Safety Policy required by this Executive Order within five days of the effective date may result in a fine not to exceed \$1,000 for each violation.

As examples: In most retail stores employees and customers will be required to wear face coverings for the duration of their stay. In restaurants and bars, customers would be required to wear masks when entering and leaving the building or going to the bathroom, however, may remove the masks at their table because the order has an exception for when consuming food or drink. In gyms, visitors would be required to wear the masks in and out, but may remove the masks if exercise stations are separated by six feet. In hotels, guests should be wearing masks in common areas indoors and socially distancing (though no mask required) at outdoor pools.

When is a mask not required in public?

Face coverings do not need to be worn in the following circumstances:

- When exercising outside or engaging in physical activity outside
- While driving alone or with passengers who are part of the same household as the driver
- When doing so poses a greater mental or physical health, safety, or security risk
- While pumping gas or operating outdoor equipment
- When consuming food or drink
- While in a building or activity that requires security surveillance or screening, for example, banks

What if my business operates outdoor areas? Do people have to wear a face covering outside?

If people are within six feet of others and not covered under the below exceptions, they are required to wear masks outdoors at businesses.

For example, people on a charter fishing vessel are required to wear a mask unless they are able to distance by at least six feet. Servers on an outdoor patio are required to wear a face covering, however, patrons who are eating or drinking at their table are not.

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How do I tell my customers?

We recommend you post the below signage at your place of business. If a person walks in without a mask, businesses should inform the individual of the city's requirement and direct them to wear a face covering. A face mask may include the following:

If a person refuses to wear a mask, and does not have a legitimate medical reason for doing so, we recommend the staff declines service to the customer or the business could face a fine.

Signs:

English: <https://www.galvestontx.gov/DocumentCenter/View/10873/85x11-Masks-Required-Sign>

Spanish: <https://www.galvestontx.gov/DocumentCenter/View/10876/Spanish-Masks-Required-Sign>

What if I have a health condition?

The order provides an exemption that people would not be required to wear a mask under the following circumstance: "When doing so poses a greater mental or physical health, safety or security risk."

The state health department and CDC has reported that children under 2 years old should not wear cloth face coverings. Also, anyone who has trouble breathing or who is unconscious, incapacitated or unable to remove the cloth face covering without help should not wear one.

People who have severe asthma or sensory sensitivities, such as those sometimes present with autism, may also have difficulty wearing a mask.

Businesses may ask for documentation of a medical condition that would prevent a person from wearing a face covering or otherwise an indicia of proof, such as a medical bracelet or inhaler, if the condition is not apparent. We encourage businesses to address this in their health and safety policy.

How long is the mask requirement in effect?

The Galveston City Council extended the mask order to remain in effect until Sept. 30.

Why are businesses responsible?

While Governor Abbott has not allowed cities to issue order to fine or jail individuals who refuse to wear masks, the state has said it is consistent with the order to require businesses to mandate masks in their establishments.

The City realizes that businesses having to police their customers is not ideal and not how we would have wanted to do this order, but it's the way the governor's office has allowed a mask requirement. We believe the public good of the policy outweighs the bad aspects of this type of enforcement.

As an individual you can support your local businesses by arriving with a mask and following the order without hassle so the business owners are not subject to fines.

Why should we do this?

The number of COVID-19 cases is rising in Texas, including in Galveston County. While some people who become infected may be asymptomatic or experience mild symptoms, others can become very ill or die. Medical experts largely agree wearing a face covering helps to prevent a person with COVID-19 from spreading it to others. Wearing a mask protects others and you are better protected when those around you wear a face covering.

Preventing further spread of COVID-19 is the best way to ensure local businesses are able to stay open and avoid another shutdown.