

Dear City employees,

On Monday, I joined King County Executive Dow Constantine and Health Officer Dr. Jeff Duchin to announce a new Directive from Public Health – Seattle & King County urging residents to wear cloth face coverings in indoor settings and outdoor settings where maintaining six feet of physical distance could be difficult. New research shows that face coverings could prevent COVID-19 from spreading when someone with the infection coughs, sneezes, or speaks, particularly among asymptomatic people. Transmission between asymptomatic people is one of the key factors behind the surge in cases in our region.

We must continue to practice good hygiene and continue physical distancing, and I believe this Directive is a necessary next step to slowing the further spread of COVID-19. Wearing cloth face coverings is part of the new normal, and we must follow this guidance. It's up to all of us to protect the health and safety of each other and our communities. Now is not the time to slow down our public health efforts, or we risk a surge in new COVID-19 cases.

In accordance with public health guidance about the importance of face coverings in reducing community spread, the City of Seattle will require that employees, contractors, vendors, and visitors of City facilities wear a protective face covering when they are likely to be in contact with another individual and distancing of approximately six feet is not able to be maintained. This policy will be effective May 18 and continue until further notice. This effort is intended to protect our workforce and the public we serve. Even during this age of physical distancing, so many of us work around other people each day, and we must ensure we're taking all necessary measures to keep ourselves and our constituents safe and healthy.

While employees may wear their own face covering, we will continue to distribute three cloth face coverings to every single City employee reporting to work sites. Employees who are teleworking should continue to do so and will be provided cloth face coverings when they return. If you have further questions about distribution timeline, please contact your supervisor or human resources representative. In addition, we will provide visitors to City facilities with a disposable face covering if they aren't already wearing one and signage will be placed at building entrances.

We recognize that there are legitimate reasons for an individual not to wear a face covering, many of which are included as exemptions in the Directive and in our internal policies. For a full list of exemptions, and more information on the details of this new policy, please review the [guidance document on face coverings and frequently asked questions](#).

This new Directive undoubtedly impacts our day-to-day lives outside of work, as well. I believe it is up to all of us to do our part personally to combat COVID-19 in our communities. Social distancing and face coverings are critical to protecting others, including workers being disproportionately impacted by the virus. As a City, we must continue to bring to the forefront racial inequities and biases that exist in our communities. I hope as a City family we can proactively discuss and address equity challenges that are arising from COVID-19 and that may arise from this public health Directive. If you witness or experience an act of harassment or bias, you can contact your department management, the City's Human Resources Investigations Unit, the [Seattle Office for Civil Rights](#), your human resources representative, or the [Office of the Employee Ombud](#).

I have been absolutely humbled by the incredible service each one of you have been providing to our community, both at work and in your personal lives. In that spirit, I invite all those who are able and interested to join the City in supporting vulnerable communities who may not have access to face coverings. If you're interested and able, you can donate cloth face coverings to help vulnerable communities stay safe and healthy through [United Way's Donation Portal](#), [King County Donation Connector](#), and [Washington Mask Challenge](#).

Thanks again for everything you're doing in service of our communities. Please continue to be compassionate and patient with one another. We're in this together, and we have to look out for one another.

Please stay safe and healthy.

Jenny