

Executive Order 13991—Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing

January 20, 2021

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including section 7902(c) of title 5, United States Code, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Policy. It is the policy of my 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). Put simply, masks and other public health measures reduce the spread of the disease, particularly when communities make widespread use of such measures, and thus save lives.

Accordingly, to protect the Federal workforce and individuals interacting with the Federal workforce, and to ensure the continuity of Government services and activities, on-duty or on-site Federal employees, on-site Federal contractors, and other individuals in Federal buildings and on Federal lands should all wear masks, maintain physical distance, and adhere to other public health measures, as provided in CDC guidelines.

Sec. 2. Immediate Action Regarding Federal Employees, Contractors, Buildings, and Lands.

(a) The heads of executive departments and agencies (agencies) shall immediately take action, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law, to require compliance with CDC 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.

(b) The Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and the Administrator of General Services, in coordination with the President's Management Council and the Coordinator of the COVID–19 Response and Counselor to the President (COVID–19 Response Coordinator), shall promptly issue guidance to assist heads of agencies with implementation of this section.

(c) Heads of agencies shall promptly consult, as appropriate, with State, local, Tribal, and territorial government officials, Federal employees, Federal employee unions, Federal contractors, and any other interested parties concerning the implementation of this section.

(d) Heads of agencies may make categorical or case-by-case exceptions in implementing subsection (a) of this section to the extent that doing so is necessary or required by law, and consistent with applicable law. If heads of agencies make such exceptions, they shall require appropriate alternative safeguards, such as additional physical distancing measures, additional testing, or reconfiguration of workspace, consistent with applicable law. Heads of agencies shall document all exceptions in writing.

(e) Heads of agencies shall review their existing authorities and, to the extent permitted by law and subject to the availability of appropriations and resources, seek to provide masks to individuals in Federal buildings when needed.

(f) The COVID–19 Response Coordinator shall coordinate the implementation of this section. Heads of the agencies listed in 31 U.S.C. 901(b) shall update the COVID–19 Response Coordinator on their progress in implementing this section, including any categorical exceptions

established under subsection (d) of this section, within 7 days of the date of this order and regularly thereafter. Heads of agencies are encouraged to bring to the attention of the COVID–19 Response Coordinator any questions regarding the scope or implementation of this section.

Sec. 3. Encouraging Masking Across America. (a) The Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), including through the Director of CDC, shall engage, as appropriate, with State, local, Tribal, and territorial officials, as well as business, union, academic, and other community leaders, regarding mask-wearing and other public health measures, with the goal of maximizing public compliance with, and addressing any obstacles to, mask-wearing and other public health best practices identified by CDC.

(b) The COVID–19 Response Coordinator, in coordination with the Secretary of HHS, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and the heads of other relevant agencies, shall promptly identify and inform agencies of options to incentivize, support, and encourage widespread mask-wearing consistent with CDC guidelines and applicable law.

Sec. 4. Safer Federal Workforce Task Force.

(a) *Establishment.* There is hereby established the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force (Task Force).

(b) *Membership.* The Task Force shall consist of the following members:

- (i) the Director of OPM, who shall serve as Co-Chair;
- (ii) the Administrator of General Services, who shall serve as Co-Chair;
- (iii) the COVID–19 Response Coordinator, who shall serve as Co-Chair;
- (iv) the Director of OMB;
- (v) the Director of the Federal Protective Service;
- (vi) the Director of the United States Secret Service;
- (vii) the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency;
- (viii) the Director of CDC; and
- (ix) the heads of such other agencies as the Co-Chairs may individually or jointly invite to participate.

(c) *Organization.* A member of the Task Force may designate, to perform the Task Force functions of the member, a senior-level official who is a full-time officer or employee of the member's agency. At the direction of the Co-Chairs, the Task Force may establish subgroups consisting exclusively of Task Force members or their designees, as appropriate.

(d) *Administration.* The General Services Administration shall provide funding and administrative support for the Task Force to the extent permitted by law and within existing appropriations. The Co-Chairs shall convene regular meetings of the Task Force, determine its agenda, and direct its work.

(e) *Mission.* The Task Force shall provide ongoing guidance to heads of agencies on the operation of the Federal Government, the safety of its employees, and the continuity of Government functions during the COVID–19 pandemic. Such guidance shall be based on public health best practices as determined by CDC and other public health experts, and shall address, at a minimum, the following subjects as they relate to the Federal workforce:

- (i) testing methodologies and protocols;
- (ii) case investigation and contact tracing;

- (iii) requirements of and limitations on physical distancing, including recommended occupancy and density standards;
- (iv) equipment needs and requirements, including personal protective equipment;
- (v) air filtration;
- (vi) enhanced environmental disinfection and cleaning;
- (vii) safe commuting and telework options;
- (viii) enhanced technological infrastructure to support telework;
- (ix) vaccine prioritization, distribution, and administration;
- (x) approaches for coordinating with State, local, Tribal, and territorial health officials, as well as business, union, academic, and other community leaders;
- (xi) any management infrastructure needed by agencies to implement public health guidance; and
- (xii) circumstances under which exemptions might appropriately be made to agency policies in accordance with CDC guidelines, such as for mission-critical purposes.

(f) *Agency Cooperation.* The head of each agency listed in 31 U.S.C. 901(b) shall, consistent with applicable law, promptly provide the Task Force a report on COVID–19 safety protocols, safety plans, or guidance regarding the operation of the agency and the safety of its employees, and any other information that the head of the agency deems relevant to the Task Force's work.

Sec. 5. Federal Employee Testing. The Secretary of HHS, through the Director of CDC, shall promptly develop and submit to the COVID–19 Response Coordinator a testing plan for the Federal workforce. This plan shall be based on community transmission metrics and address the populations to be tested, testing types, frequency of testing, positive case protocols, and coordination with local public health authorities for contact tracing.

Sec. 6. Research and Development. The Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, in consultation with the Secretary of HHS (through the National Science and Technology Council), the Director of OMB, the Director of CDC, the Director of the National Institutes of Health, the Director of the National Science Foundation, and the heads of any other appropriate agencies, shall assess the availability of Federal research grants to study best practices for implementing, and innovations to better implement, effective mask-wearing and physical distancing policies, with respect to both the Federal workforce and the general public.

Sec. 7. Scope. (a) For purposes of this order:

- (i) "Federal employees" and "Federal contractors" mean employees (including members of the Armed Forces and members of the National Guard in Federal service) and contractors (including such contractors' employees) working for the executive branch;
- (ii) "Federal buildings" means buildings, or office space within buildings, owned, rented, or leased by the executive branch of which a substantial portion of occupants are Federal employees or Federal contractors; and
- (iii) "Federal lands" means lands under executive branch control.

(b) The Director of OPM and the Administrator of General Services shall seek to consult, in coordination with the heads of any other relevant agencies and the COVID–19 Response Coordinator, with the Sergeants at Arms of the Senate and the House of Representatives and the Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts (or such other persons designated by the Majority and Minority Leaders of the Senate, the Speaker and Minority Leader

of the House, or the Chief Justice of the United States, respectively), to promote mask-wearing, physical distancing, and adherence to other public health measures within the legislative and judicial branches, and shall provide requested technical assistance as needed to facilitate compliance with CDC guidelines.

Sec. 8. General Provisions. (a) Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

(i) the authority granted by law to an executive department or agency, or the head thereof; or

(ii) the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(b) This order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(c) Independent agencies are strongly encouraged to comply with the requirements of this order.

(d) This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR.

The White House,
January 20, 2021.

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NOTE: This Executive order was published in the *Federal Register* on January 25.

Categories: Executive Orders : Federal workforce protection efforts and mask-wearing requirements on Federal properties.

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