



Indoor Masking FAQs

(Updated 8-17-2021)

Below are answers to frequently asked questions (FAQ) about the Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) [333-019-1025](#), Masking Requirements for Indoor Spaces.

Q: Does the mask rule apply only in public indoor spaces or is a private workplace like a manufacturing plant required to comply, even if we don't allow members of the public into the space?

A: Under the rule, an indoor space includes public and private workplaces, which include food processing plants and manufacturing facilities. Individuals are required to wear a mask or face covering in indoor private workplaces unless they are in a private individual workspace. A private individual workspace is an indoor space within a public or private workplace used for work by one individual at a time that is enclosed on all sides with walls from floor to ceiling and with a closed door.

Q: Does the indoor masking rule apply to indoor sports for kids?

A: Practice and play for indoor competitive sports are exempt from the rule and face coverings are not required. Sports operators, however, may require masks or face coverings as part of an organizational policy.

Q: Does the indoor masking rule apply to youth programs?

A: Yes.

Q: Is a faith leader speaking to a faith audience considered an individual who is delivering a speech to an audience and therefore exempt from the rule?

A: Yes, a faith leader would be exempt in the same way as anyone else who is speaking to an audience. The exemption only applies, however, while the speaker is delivering the speech to an audience.

Q: If my business or organization does not want to allow individuals to wear face shields inside, am I allowed to require only masks or face coverings?

A: Yes. If your business or organization chooses to have a stricter requirement than the state rule, OHA recommends you post a sign with that stricter requirement.

Q: What is considered a "competitive sport"? Is playing basketball with friends at a fitness center considered a competitive sport?

A: A competitive sport is one that is generally played as part of a team or league, with scheduled practices and games, usually through a school, recreational league, or sports club.

Q: If my county has a stricter mask requirement than the state, do I have to follow the county's requirements?

A: Yes. You are required to follow the stricter requirements.

Q: Can people or businesses be penalized both by the state and by a county for violating mask requirements in both jurisdictions?

A: Yes.

Q: If a person or business is violating the state rule, where can I report this violation?

A: Individuals may file complaints with the Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OR-OSHA) by visiting <https://osha.oregon.gov/workers/Pages/index.aspx>.

Q: Is there an exemption to this rule for cooks and other restaurant workers who work in the back of the house? Especially with the heat this summer, can they be exempt if they are vaccinated and stay six feet apart?

A: No. There are no exemptions for this scenario. OHA strongly encourages employers give employees frequent breaks so that they may go outside and take regular mask breaks. Visit OR-OSHA's [heat stress website](#) for rules related to heat exposure and illness and additional information on prevention of heat stress.

Q: What should I do if a potential customer or visitor shows up without a mask, face covering or face shield to an indoor space I am responsible for?

A: You should offer a mask, face covering or face shield and make reasonable efforts to get the customer or visitor to comply. Persons responsible for indoor spaces may provide masks or face coverings for customers or visitors who do not have one.

Q: What should I do if a potential customer or visitor shows up without a mask, face covering or face shield and claims their disability prevents them from wearing a mask, face covering, or face shield?

A: If a person with a disability cannot wear a mask, face covering or face shield where one is required, and it is a place of public accommodation, the business will need to work with that person to determine if there is a reasonable accommodation. Some common reasonable accommodations are free curbside pick-up, free delivery or an appointment by phone or video.

Q: Are there exemptions from the requirement to wear a mask, face covering or face shield for employees who say they cannot wear one?

A: If an employee cannot wear a mask, face covering or face shield because of a disability, the employer must work with the employee to determine whether a reasonable accommodation can be provided. An employer should work with their human resources department or speak to their legal counsel to determine their legal

options for addressing this issue. Employers may also reach out to the [Bureau of Labor and Industries](#) (BOLI) for technical assistance.

Q: Is a chef's plastic facemask, sometimes known as a "mingle mask," that covers the chin and mouth area acceptable as a mask, face covering or face shield?

A: No. A face shield must cover the forehead, extend below the chin and wrap around the sides of the face.

Q: Will I have to wear a mask, face covering or face shield when accessing state services or entering state buildings?

A: Yes.

Q: Does the indoor masking rule apply to childcare settings?

A: Yes. Additional information about childcare settings is on the [Early Learning Division's website](#).

Q: Does the indoor masking rule apply to institutions of higher education (colleges and universities)?

A: Yes. Visit the Higher Education Coordinating Commission [COVID-19 website](#) to access additional guidance for higher education institutions.

Q: Does the indoor masking rule apply to apartment buildings?

A: Yes. People must wear a mask, face covering or face shield when in common spaces of apartment buildings, such as in lobbies, hallways, elevators and laundry rooms. These areas are considered indoor spaces. People are not required to wear a mask, face covering or face shield when they are in their own apartments.

Q: What barriers may people with disabilities experience when other people wear masks, face coverings or face shields?

A: Barriers people with disabilities may experience are:

- Some people need to see mouth movements or facial expressions to know what you are saying.
- Some people with developmental disabilities or differences can misread or misinterpret facial expressions. A person may have trouble with understanding emotion from tone of voice alone. If you're wearing a mask, they may get cues only from your eyes or eyebrows, which could lead to a negative interpretation or misunderstanding of the emotion or intent of the speaker.
- Some people who are hard of hearing read lips. Mouth movements and facial expressions can communicate a lot of information and masks that are not clear prevent people from seeing the speaker's mouth.
- Sign language uses the mouth to communicate certain words and meanings. When a face covering blocks a person's mouth, it makes it hard for people using sign language to communicate.

Employers and places of public accommodations must work with persons with a disability to arrange a reasonable accommodation that will permit an employee to do their job or allow a patron to access services. Those denied a reasonable accommodation should contact Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) [Civil Rights Division](#) at 971-673-0764 or crdemail@boli.state.or.us.

Q: Is there anyone who should not wear a mask, face covering or face shield?

A: Yes. The following individuals should not wear a mask, face covering or face shield:

- Children under the age of two (2).
- Anyone who cannot safely wear a mask, face covering or face shield because of a disability or medical condition, in which case an accommodation should be requested.
- Anyone who is having trouble breathing, is unconscious, or unable to put on the face covering, take it off or remove it without help.
- Anyone who is sleeping.

Q: Are masks with exhalation valves acceptable face coverings?

A: No. Masks with exhalation valves are intended to make breathing easier and prevent humidity buildup. Depending on mask type and mask fit, these masks can protect the wearer from inhaling droplets and aerosols. However, most of these masks do not filter exhaled or forced aerosols and droplets because the exhalation valve is not equipped with a filter. These masks are not acceptable to prevent transmission of viruses.

Q: Is it safe to wear a mask or face covering for prolonged periods of time?

A: Yes. Prolonged masking is common in many occupations to protect workers. Some examples include health care workers (e.g., performing prolonged surgery), construction (e.g., protection against dust and other particles) and environmental workers (e.g., removing mold). The face coverings that are typically worn by the general public during COVID-19 are less tight-fitting than the masks worn by health care, construction and environmental workers, so they are even less likely to restrict airflow in a way that could cause health problems. People with breathing difficulties may have problems wearing face coverings. Anyone who cannot safely wear a mask, face covering or face shield because of a disability or medical condition should request an accommodation.

Q: Do I have to wear a mask or face covering if I am in my cubicle at work and no one else is in the cubicle with me?

A: Yes. An individual must wear a mask, face covering or face shield in a cubicle unless the cubicle is a private individual workspace. A private individual workspace is an indoor space within a public or private workplace used for work by one individual at a time that is enclosed on all sides with walls from floor to ceiling and with a closed door.

Q: Do I have to wear a face covering when I'm in my own home?

A: No. Individuals are not required to wear a face covering while in their own homes.

Q: Are there times when OHA recommends I wear a face covering when outside?

A: Yes. OHA recommends that when in crowded areas or large gatherings, individuals who are unvaccinated, immunocompromised, who are at risk for severe COVID-19 disease, or live with someone in one of these categories continue to wear a mask or face covering and maintain physical distancing of at least six (6) feet from other individuals. Crowded areas and large gatherings of individuals include but are not limited to venues, event areas, sports events, fairs, festivals, parades, graduation ceremonies or wedding receptions. You can access OHA's recommendations for wearing masks and face coverings when in outdoor settings [here](#).

Q: Are choirs that perform in faith institutions or in other types of organizations considered performers and therefore exempt from the indoor masking requirement?

A: Due to the risk of these types of performances, OHA strongly recommends performers wear a mask or face covering while singing, maintain as much physical distance as possible and consider using amplifiers or other sound enhancing equipment to reduce the need for performers to raise their voices in order to increase volume. Singing in a choir has been associated with extensive spread of COVID-19 because vigorous singing is more likely to result in the expulsion of potentially infectious droplets from the throat. With the significant increase in Delta variant cases, there is much more opportunity for these infectious droplets to further spread COVID-19 in the community. However, this activity is considered performance and therefore is not subject to the indoor masking requirement.

Document accessibility: For individuals with disabilities or individuals who speak a language other than English, OHA can provide information in alternate formats such as translations, large print, or braille. Contact the Health Information Center at 1-971-673-2411, 711 TTY or COVID19.LanguageAccess@dhs.ohio.gov.