

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: FACE COVERING POLICY

### **General Questions**

*Q: Who does this guidance apply to? Where do I need to wear a face covering?*

A: All military personnel, DOD civilian employees, family members, DOD contractors, and all other individuals on DOD property, installations, and facilities will wear cloth face coverings when they cannot maintain six feet of physical distance in public areas (i.e. commissaries, Exchanges, passageways of buildings, etc.), training areas (i.e. combat vehicle crews, range towers, etc.) or work areas (i.e. office spaces, VTC rooms, military police patrol cars, etc.). It is important to note that the wearing of face coverings does not eliminate the requirement to maintain six feet of physical distance whenever possible.

*Q: Will the U.S. Army supply me with a face covering?*

A: No. At this time, the U.S. Army will not supply face coverings. It is possible that in the future face coverings may be provided to military personnel and/or civilian employees based on a variety of circumstances. However, no official guidance has been given concerning if or when that could happen.

*Q: Are there exceptions to wearing face coverings?*

A: Cloth face coverings are not required in domiciles, when traveling in personally-owned vehicles (POVs), or when conducting physical training (provided six feet of distance is maintained).

Additionally, in accordance with the CDC guidelines (see <https://go.usa.gov/xvj4E>), face coverings are not required for children younger than two years of age, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cover without assistance. Further exceptions may be approved on a case by case basis and subject to local conditions, by O-5 commanders or O-6 supervisors.

*Q: Where can I get medical masks?*

A: Medical masks will not be supplied as these resources need to stay in medical channels. Even without a medical mask, all should be utilizing a facial covering AND adhering to social distancing measures.

*Q: Why do we have to wear face coverings?*

A: CDC recommends that people wear a cloth face covering to cover their nose and mouth in the community setting. This is to protect people around you if

you are infected but do not have symptoms. It is important to understand: a face covering will not prevent you from *getting infected*, but may prevent you from *infecting others*. Therefore, a face covering is not a substitute for maintaining 6 feet of physical distance from others whenever possible. [From the CDC's website]

*Q: Where can I find out more information about face coverings?*

A: For the CDC guidelines on face coverings, visit <https://go.usa.gov/xvjTp>. Soldiers, DOD civilian employees, and contractors should also contact their chain of command or supervisors with questions.

*Q: I am a home-based business owner who can sew face coverings. Can I sell face coverings to community members? Are there restrictions?*

A: To protect the health of the community and limit the spread of COVID 19, home-based business sales that require in person (face-to-face) transactions are prohibited within USAG-Bavaria (and prohibited by the current host nation restrictions).

*Q: I sewed face coverings and would like to donate them to community members in need. Where can I donate the face coverings?*

A: When organizations are identified as willing to accept donations, that information will be provided as available.

*Q: How often do I need to wash my face covering?*

A: According to the CDC, face coverings should be routinely washed depending on the frequency of use. A washing machine using hot water should suffice in properly washing a face covering. [From the CDC's website]

## **Soldiers in Uniform**

*Q: How do I make a face covering?*

A: 7<sup>th</sup> Army Training Command advises Soldiers to use a recently-issued OCP shirt as a face covering. The 7<sup>th</sup> ATC FRAGO includes an enclosure with instructions.

*Q: Why can't Soldiers use balaclavas or neck gaiters instead of t-shirts?*

A: Leadership considered the use of issued gear and determined t-shirts were the best option with an easy to follow, readily accessible, uniform standard to

ensure a clean face covering is used each day. Every Soldier has multiple t-shirts and those are items easily and consistently cleaned through the laundry.

*Q: I have concerns that the extra t-shirt will be hot especially as the temperature increases outside. Is there another option?*

A: In working to prevent the spread of COVID-19, our leadership works hard to strike the right balance in ensuring personal safety while enforcing protective measures. When social distancing cannot be maintained facial covering is required, regardless of the weather. Leadership considered the use of issued gear and determined t-shirts were the best option with an easy to follow, readily accessible, uniform standard to ensure a clean face covering is used each day. Every Soldier has multiple t-shirts and those are items easily and consistently cleaned through the laundry. This is an interim measure and it is possible that the Army will, in the future, issue purpose-built face masks. For the time being, use your t-shirt.

*Q: I don't think the OCP t-shirt is medically effective. Is there another option?*

A: According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), social distancing of six feet or more, along with facial covering helps prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Wearing a face covering is an additional measure to help prevent people who may be infected but not showing symptoms from spreading COVID-19. Soldiers who believe they need an exception to policy can seek one from either a commander in the grade of O-5 or supervisor in the grade of O-6. Again, wearing a face covering will not prevent you from getting infected. Its purpose is to slow the transmission from the wearer to others. Many carriers of the novel coronavirus are asymptomatic, and do not even know they have it.

*Q: What else can I use?*

A: See the 7<sup>th</sup> ATC FRAGO. Soldiers should not use materials from Army Combat Uniforms, or other fabrics that have been chemically-treated, to fashion face coverings.

### **Soldiers Out of Uniform**

*Q: If I'm off-duty and wearing civilian clothes, what face covering can I wear?*

A: The CDC provides both sew and non-sew methods for creating cloth face coverings. Instructions are at <https://go.usa.gov/xvjTp>.

## **Local National Employees**

*Q: Does this guidance apply to local national employees?*

A: Yes, the requirement for face covering applies to all military personnel, DOD civilian employees, family members, DOD contractors, and all other individuals on DOD property, installations, and facilities. Since LN employees are DOD civilian employees, they are covered by the order.

## **Department of the Army Civilians and Dependents**

*Q: Can I enter Exchanges and Commissary without one?*

A: No. All military personnel, DOD civilian employees, family members, DOD contractors, and all other individuals on DOD property, installations, and facilities will wear cloth face coverings when they cannot maintain six feet of physical distance in public areas, such as the Exchanges and Commissaries.

*Q: I'm not in the U.S. Army / I don't have a chain of command, does this apply to me?*

A: Yes. All individuals on Army installations are expected to follow the standards of conduct expected of all community members and can be removed from the installation for failure to follow protection measures established for our military communities.

*Q: Who should not wear a face mask?*

A: Face coverings are not required for children younger than two years of age, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cover without assistance.

*Q: I purchased medical face masks years ago. The medical face masks were never worn. Can I wear a medical face mask instead of a cloth face covering? Is there a shelf-life for medical face masks?*

A: These products were designed to serve as protective barriers and thus it is believed they may still offer some protection even when they are used beyond the manufacturer's designated shelf life or expiration date. The user should visibly inspect the product prior to use and if there are concerns (such as degraded materials or visible tears) the product should be discarded.