

COVID-19 - Face Covering Guideline

Edmonton

September 22, 2020, 5 p.m.

As of November 24, new mandatory public health measures are in effect across Alberta to protect the health system and slow the spread of COVID-19. For the most up to date information, refer to the [Employee Guide](#) or visit the [COVID-19 onecity page](#) for updates.

The City of Edmonton is at **Level 3** requiring the use of face coverings in all indoor public places (publicly or privately owned) and public vehicles (including bus, LRT and vehicles for hire). The bylaw came into effect **August 1** and will run to the end of 2020. All employees and members of the public are required to wear a face covering over their mouth, nose and chin in public spaces, with some exceptions (below). Further information on the Temporary Mandatory Face Covering Bylaw 19408 can be found on the City of Edmonton [website](#).

Exceptions include:



- Persons under the age of 2
- Persons who are unable to place, use, or remove a face covering without assistance
- Persons unable to wear a face covering due to a mental or physical concern or limitation, or protected ground under the *Alberta Human Rights Act*
- Persons consuming food or drink in designated seating areas or as part of religious or spiritual ceremony
- Persons engaged in water activities or physical exercise
- Persons providing care or assistance to a person with a disability where a face covering would hinder that caregiving or assistance
- Persons engaging in tasks or services that require the temporary removal of a face covering (e.g. in order to don a respirator)

The use of medical-grade masks, non-medical masks, and cloth face coverings - where physical distancing is difficult - can help to slow and in some cases even prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus by individuals who have the virus but are not yet showing symptoms. Wearing a mask or face covering is not intended to replace the other COVID-19 public health and transmission control measures, particularly physical distancing between individuals. It is also important to note that there is still a risk of being exposed to COVID-19 even when wearing respirators and masks, especially if these devices are not used or maintained properly.

What does this mean for City of Edmonton employees?

City of Edmonton employees are included in this requirement and *examples* of workplace locations where a face covering is required include the public reception areas at City facilities, inside public transit centres, public entrances to City buildings and public areas of other external businesses where City employees go on City business.

In preparation for employees returning from their temporary work from home arrangements, the City of Edmonton has set the standard for all employees to wear masks or face coverings when they are not behind a physical barrier or in their designated workstations. This means employees will need to mask when arriving at the work location, using the elevator and stair wells, accessing shared spaces such as washrooms and lunchrooms, and while riding in personal or city vehicles with others.

Employees may remove their mask when they are in their designated work spaces or where their hazard assessment has identified other, sufficient controls (e.g. use of an Bus Operator shield, behind a barrier at the front counter of a recreation centre, etc).

Masks and face coverings should be used in addition to practicing the other health precautions to protect yourself and others from COVID-19 as outlined in the COVID-19 Hazard Assessment. The use of any type of mask or face covering does not replace the requirement of pre-shift screening, physical distancing, frequent hand washing practices, cough and sneeze etiquette and staying home when sick.

Employees are encouraged to bring their own cloth face coverings to wear in situations where a face covering is required. The City of Edmonton will continue to provide respiratory protective equipment, including non-medical masks where the current hazards of the workplace require it as per the COVID-19 hazard assessment for each business area.

In some circumstances, a mask or respirator will be provided to employees who work on another employer's worksite where face coverings are mandated. Affected workers have been notified in writing of this requirement.

Employees are not expected to enforce the public masking requirement to patrons or visitors of City facilities and amenities. Employees can educate the public on the mandate when entering indoor spaces, provide what exceptions there are, and assist in answering and addressing questions and concerns.

Safety considerations while wearing masks and face coverings

When wearing a medical-grade mask, non-medical mask, or face covering, please follow the guidance provided by [Alberta Health](#) about their proper use:

- you **must** wash your hands immediately before putting it on and immediately after taking it off (in addition to practicing good hand hygiene while wearing it)
- it should fit well (non-gaping) and cover the nose, mouth and chin.

Masks and face coverings can become contaminated on the outside, or when touched by your hands. When wearing a mask or face covering, take the following precautions to protect yourself:

- avoid touching your mask or face covering while wearing it
- change the mask or face covering as soon as it gets damp or soiled
 - place cloth face coverings directly into the washing machine or a bag that can be emptied into the washing machine and then disposed of

- medical-grade or non-medical masks that cannot be washed should be discarded and replaced as soon as they get damp, soiled or crumpled:
 - dispose of masks directly in a lined garbage receptacle
- when moving the mask, avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth and try to remove the mask by only touching the straps
- ensure proper storage of your mask or cloth face covering - placing it in a sealed bag to safely transport the device home for cleaning
- have multiple clean masks or face coverings, as per the guidance from Alberta Health, to be able to change the mask or face coverings when it becomes damp or soiled

It is important to remember that non-medical masks are not tested like medical masks or respirators (example: N95) and as a result their use comes with risks and limitations ([Health Canada](#)):

- Masks can be difficult to breathe through and can prevent you from getting the required amount of oxygen needed by your body.
 - Persons with existing medical and respiratory conditions should consult with a healthcare professional before wearing a mask, to ensure wearing the mask does not cause additional health complications or risks.
- Masks can easily become contaminated and will need to be changed frequently.
- Masks need to be fitted properly for them to provide sufficient protection.
- If you adjust a mask with unclean hands, you may be increasing your risk of exposure to COVID-19 or other respiratory viruses.

The Government of Alberta has [Guidance for Wearing Non-medical Face Masks for the General Public](#). The City of Edmonton created a [guide](#) to explain more on the types of masks, procedures and controls we have in place at the City.