Navy Mandates Face Covering: What You Need to Know

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By MC1 Mark D. Faram, Chief of Naval Personnel Public Affairs.

WASHINGTON (NNS) -- The Navy will now require the use of cloth face coverings for all military, Navy civilian and contractors as well as family members while on DoD property, installations and facilities when maintaining proper social distancing between people isn’t possible.

The order is effective immediately, according to NavAdmin message 100/20, released April 5.

“To the extent practical,” the message states, individuals “are required to wear cloth face coverings when they cannot maintain six feet of social distance.”

The message aligns the Navy with the Centers for Disease Control’s recent recommendation strongly encouraging the wearing of cloth face coverings when in public and close proximity between people can’t be avoided.

As is the Navy’s convention, local commanders can issue exceptions to this requirement.

The policy also requires anyone wearing a face covering to uncover their faces when directed to by security forces during identity checks.

“Navy will continue to implement protective measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 to our total force and their families, and the American people,” the message said.

While medical N95 masks are in short supply world-wide, face coverings are not, and the Navy is taking a practical approach to what can be worn.

Official uniform face coverings are in the works, the message said. But until they are procured and implemented, those in uniform can wear medical or construction type masks if they have them.

If not, they can fashion their own or wear cloth coverings such as bandanas and scarfs. In all cases, however, anything worn must be conservative in appearance, not offensive, and conform to the CDC guidance.

Any face covering must meet the following requirements:

- Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face and allow breathing without restriction
- Cover the face only from nose to chin.
- Must secure in place with ties or ear loops.
- Any cloth mask must have multiple layers of fabric.

Navy supports, and will continue to implement, all measures necessary to mitigate risks to the force, to our mission and to the spread of the disease and as a result, the message said.

Even when off-base or in not uniform, the message strongly encourages all uniformed and civilian Navy personnel, to follow all CDC guidelines, including the use of face coverings.

Directions to make your own face coverings can be found on the CDC website at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html

The latest DoD policies can be found at: https://www.defense.gov/explore/spotlight/coronavirus.

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