

Alert | Health Emergency Preparedness Task Force: Business Continuity Amid COVID-19



July 2021

New Requirements for Federal Workers and New DC Mask Mandate

With the recent uptick in COVID-19 infection rates, President Biden issued a **new mandate** for federal workers requiring proof of vaccination or compliance with additional safety precautions. Similarly, Mayor Muriel Bowser announced a **new mask mandate for the District of Columbia**.

Further Safety Precautions for Federal Workers and Contractors

On July 29, President Biden announced that federal workers (including onsite contractors) now will be required to attest to their vaccination status. Absent an attestation of full vaccination, workers/contractors “will be required to wear a mask on the job no matter their geographic location, physically distance from all other employees and visitors, comply with a weekly or twice weekly screening testing requirement, and be subject to restrictions on official travel.”

Additionally, the President directed his staff to consider steps to apply similar standards to all federal contractors. Thus, employers who are federal contractors should begin to prepare for similar regulations regarding safety mandates and protocols. Employers who are federal contractors should take note of individual agency mandates. On July 28, the Department of Homeland Security mandated all employees to wear masks and socially distance regardless of vaccination status.

District of Columbia Mask Mandate

On July 29, District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser issued an Order which reinstates indoor mask mandates for all residents and visitors two years old and older regardless of vaccination status. The mandate begins at 5 a.m. on Saturday, July 31. In addition to wearing a mask whenever indoors, the Mayor also encouraged residents to wear a mask when outdoors in large groups and further indicated her administration is working with the District's labor partners to create a vaccination requirement for District of Columbia workers.

The Mayor's Order states that private businesses may impose restrictions stricter than the indoor-mask mandate, e.g., requiring the wearing of masks outdoors and/or showing proof of vaccination to enter their premises. The Order also provides that businesses may exclude or refuse service to anyone not in compliance with the Order and take appropriate employment action against employees who place themselves and the public in danger by failing to comply with the mask mandate. Employers must still make appropriate accommodations for employees with disabilities and religious restrictions.

District agencies are authorized to issue "rules consistent with or take enforcement action directly under th[e] Order . . . to provide for the revocation, suspension, or limitation of a license, permit, certificate, endorsement, or other authorization of a person or entity that violates this Order." Further, individuals or entities that knowingly fail to comply with the mask mandate will be subject to civil and administrative penalties that include, but are not limited to, fines up to \$1,000 or summary suspension or revocation of licenses.

Enforcement of the Order does not apply to individuals from the federal government or the legislative branch of the DC government while such persons are working. Further, masks may be removed while persons are eating and drinking in establishments.

Neither Governors from Maryland or Virginia have issued or reinstated mask mandates. Virginia Gov. Northam, however, has requested that residents and visitors in high infection areas wear masks regardless of vaccination status.

For more information and updates on the developing situation, visit [GT's Health Emergency Preparedness Task Force: Coronavirus Disease 2019](#) and [Business Continuity Amid COVID-19](#) page.

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