



# Marine Safety Information Bulletin

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U.S. Coast Guard  
Inspections and Compliance Directorate  
2703 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE, STOP 7501

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## COVID-19 Safety Requirements in the Maritime Transportation System

The President issued Executive Order (13998), Promoting COVID-19 Safety in Domestic and International Travel that requires masks be worn on all “public maritime vessels, including ferries” to mitigate the risk of spreading COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued order, [Requirement for Persons to Wear Masks while on Transportation Hubs, 29JAN2021](#), requires all persons travelling on all commercial vessels to wear a mask.

This Order requires conveyance operators to use best efforts to ensure that any person on the conveyance wears a mask when boarding, disembarking, and for the duration of travel. Depending on the circumstances, best efforts may include:

- boarding only those persons who wear masks;
- instructing persons that Federal law requires wearing a mask on the conveyance and failure to comply constitutes a violation of Federal law;
- monitoring persons on board the conveyance for anyone who is not wearing a mask and seeking compliance from such persons;
- at the earliest opportunity, disembarking any person who refuses to comply;
- providing persons with prominent and adequate notice to facilitate awareness and compliance of the requirement of this Order to wear a mask; best practices may include, if feasible, advanced notifications on digital platforms, such as on apps, websites, or email; posted signage in multiple languages with illustrations; printing the requirement on transit tickets; or other methods as appropriate.

The CDC has guidance on the definition of a mask and how to properly wear a mask at the following link <https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/masks/mask-travel-guidance.html>

Under Title 42 of the United States Code section 268, the Coast Guard is charged with enforcing CDC quarantine orders. Owners, operators, and crew of vessels that fail to implement the mask wearing order above may be subject to civil or criminal penalties from the CDC. Furthermore, based on the scientific determination of the CDC, the Coast Guard finds that failure to wear a mask creates an undue safety risk by increasing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 between passengers, the crew of the vessel, and port operators. COVID-19 is known to cause severe illness and death which impacts the safe operations of ships and port facilities. The Coast Guard has broad authority to control the movement and operations of a vessel based on a hazardous condition found on that vessel (see 33 CFR § 160.111). Vessels that have not implemented the mask requirement may be issued a Captain of the Port (COTP) order directing the vessel’s movement and operations; repeated failure to impose the mask mandate could result in civil penalties and/or criminal action.

Persons that wish to report vessels not operating in accordance with the Executive Order or CDC Order may email the Coast Guard at [wearamask@uscg.mil](mailto:wearamask@uscg.mil). This shared email inbox is not monitored on a continuous basis. If there is an emergency, it should not be reported to this email inbox, but rather to local authorities through proper emergency channels.

Vessel owners and operators are encouraged to monitor the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/> for the most up to date guidance.

State, local, Tribal, and territorial laws or rules imposing public health measures that are more protective of public health than those required by the CDC, are an acceptable equivalency for these requirements. Vessel operators who believe local mask wearing requirements fit this exemption should contact the local COTP.

Questions concerning this notice may be forwarded to Coast Guard Office of Commercial Vessel Compliance, at [wearamask@uscg.mil](mailto:wearamask@uscg.mil).

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