

THE GRAND LODGE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS



KENNETH A. CLAY, JR.
GRAND MASTER

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June 10, 2020

TO: All NH Master Masons

SUBJECT: Re-entry Plan – Updated Guidance on Communications and Events

Brethren,

The “Stay at Home” Order issued by the Governor of the State of New Hampshire is due to expire on June 15, 2020. NOW, THEREFORE, I hereby issue the following process for continuing the business of Freemasonry during a declared pandemic, state of emergency, or another major calamity restricting the Craft’s ability to meet freely.

I believe in the autonomy of our institutions and the importance of letting our leaders lead. To that end, effective immediately, Masonic activities within the Jurisdiction may resume subject to all local and state laws and guidance set forth from applicable government agencies. You must follow all laws that affect your body or building. To everyone in position to make the decision as to how your body will move forward, I strongly urge you to assess your membership and put the wellbeing of your members above all else.

My EDICT remains in effect. As such, any duly elected and installed Worshipful Master of any Lodge in this Grand Jurisdiction may continue to cancel any regular Stated Communication of his Lodge for reasons specific to the COVID-19 Virus.

Today, I am announcing a phased re-entry plan. Stage 1 commences on June 15, 2020 and applies to Stated Communications and Special Communications. Stage 2 applies to holding of Degrees. Because of the requirement for proximity of our members and candidates during Degrees, this stage will be entered into later. Stage 3 applies to Veterans and Special Ladies Programs. Because our Veterans and Special Ladies represent a COVID-19 high-risk demographic, this stage will also be entered into later.

For those Lodges who typically go dark during the summer months, I encourage you to consider calling Special Communications to help your Lodge members remain connected and to keep the Masonic flame burning.

For those Lodges that plan to reconvene, the following steps must be taken to ensure the health and safety of our members.

Stage 1 Reconvene Stated Communications and Special Communications

Masonic Lodges shall communicate to members and workers that if they are feeling sick, are exhibiting any of the following symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell), or have potentially been exposed to someone with confirmed or suspected COVID-19, then they should not attend Lodge Communications or in-person activities. A potential exposure means having household contact or having close contact (within 6 feet) with an individual with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 for a prolonged period (over 10 minutes) while the person is symptomatic or 48 hours before symptoms developed.

Persons who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, according to the Centers for Disease Control (e.g., due to age 65 or greater, or underlying medical conditions), are encouraged to stay home.

Restrictions for Stated and Special Communications:

- Occupancy Limitations
 - All Lodges shall limit occupancy to levels compliant with state and local guidelines, while assuring compliance with 6-foot social distancing within the Lodge Room.
 - The Worshipful Master shall designate a Lodge Officer to monitor the number of attendees entering the Lodge building to ensure compliance with the maximum occupancy level.
- Per CDC guidelines
 - Continue to practice social distancing—this may include the Chaplain finding another seat in the Lodge to ensure being at least 6 feet from the Master. All Brethren must be seated at least 6 feet from each other
 - All attendees and members must wear face coverings or masks while inside and while entering and exiting Lodge buildings or otherwise participating in in-person meetings, except where a person is unable to wear a face covering or mask because of a medical or disabling condition.
 - Please wash your hands frequently
 - Cleanliness of the Lodge and Lodge building
 - All common area surfaces will be cleaned before you reopen: doorknobs, bathroom, and kitchen surfaces, etc.
 - All Lodge implements will be cleaned—Gavels, Wardens Truncheons, Rods, etc.
 - The Lodge will be thoroughly cleaned before and after communications and gatherings
- If available, an abundance of hand sanitizer will be readily accessible
- Until further notice, I am suspending the sending up/down of the Grand Masonic Word for Stated Communications opened under the Master Mason Degree
- Lodges/members will launder their white aprons before and after use
- Use of shared items such as officer aprons and collars are discouraged at this time
- When conducting a ballot, the Ballot Box will be placed in a central location within the Lodge Room (not on the Altar), and Brethren will be asked to cast their ballot in a socially distant manner. Use of hand sanitizer immediately following balloting is encouraged. If

hand sanitizer is not available, then following the vote, the Master is encouraged to put the Lodge at ease so that the Brethren may wash their hands.

- Get well or similar cards will not be passed around the Lodge. The Secretary is authorized to sign the card on behalf of the Lodge and members present
- No handouts will be distributed
- Consistent with the 6-foot separation rule, no handshakes, elbow bumps, or hugs are allowed
- Lodge communications shall not have a communal gathering pre- or post-service (e.g., dinner or collation) at this time.
- No food or drink shall be served before, during or after a Lodge communication or activity at this time.
- No dine-in public meals (spaghetti dinners, community breakfasts, etc.) are allowed at this time. Community to-go meals are allowed.
- Investigating committees
 - Face-to-face investigations are allowed so long as you are compliant with the above guidelines (social distancing, use of hand sanitizer and face masks)
 - You are still encouraged to meet at the prospect's home, but meetings should be held outside
- If a Masonic Lodge or building has an attendee or worker who has tested positive for COVID-19, it shall notify the Grand Lodge of New Hampshire Office and follow all state and local laws to assist in contact tracing, isolation and self-quarantine. The Office will inform the DDGM and Grand Master of any such occurrences.
- To ensure that social distancing is honored, no Visitations will be held in June 2020.
- A modified Degree Inspection process is currently being developed. Until that process is introduced, no Degree Inspections will take place. Please also refrain from holding Degree rehearsals until further notice.

Subsequent Stages

- Consistent with CDC and State Government guidelines:
 - Guidance will be provided when I declare it safe to hold Degrees.
 - Guidance will be provided when I declare it safe to hold Veterans and Special Ladies events.
 - Guidance will be provided when I declare it safe to hold collations

Brethren, we have been apart for far too long. For those Lodges who typically go dark during the summer months, I encourage you to consider calling Special Communications to help your Lodge members remain connected and to keep the Masonic flame burning. Just make sure you properly notify the Brethren in advance, clearly stating the purpose of your Special Communication.

Fraternally,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kenneth A. Clay, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed in a light blue rectangular box.

Kenneth A. Clay, Jr., *Grand Master*