

THE GRAND LODGE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS



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GRAND MASTER

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Updated Guidance on Lodge Precautions for COVID

Brethren,

On April 16, 2021, the Governor of the State of New Hampshire reduced his mandate for wearing a mask to just a recommendation. Then on May 8, 2021 the Governor further reduced the Safer at Home 2.0 Mandates to just a guidance document from the State to a Universal Best Practices. Since the beginning of this pandemic in March of 2020, the Grand Lodge of New Hampshire has followed the guidance from our State and Federal Government to protect its membership.

Many more people are now vaccinated and things are moving in a positive direction. However, by no means are we completely past this pandemic. Rather, we need to use common sense in our actions. Further, there are still restrictions in many local communities to which we must adhere.

We all need to continue to comply with the laws of our State and local governments. However, based on the changes issued by the State of New Hampshire, I am providing this Updated Guidance on COVID Safety Protocols for all New Hampshire Masons to take effect **Tuesday June 1, 2021**.

- **Lodge Member Safety:** Masks are now **OPTIONAL** for Brethren while in their Lodge. Proper hand washing, and social distancing are still highly encouraged and Lodges should still make hand sanitizers available. Worshipful Masters still retain the authority to mandate mask wearing in their Lodges if they feel that it is appropriate.
- **Illness:** I want to remind Brethren 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 until the appropriate quarantine time has passed and they are symptom free.
- **Meetings:** Lodges are encouraged to begin meeting in person at the discretion of the Worshipful Master. The culture of a Lodge is based on inter-personal communications and we need these meetings to remain engaged. Meetings for other semipublic events like Veterans and Special Ladies programs are also encouraged.

- **Member Attendance:** No Brother should feel forced to attend any Stated Communications if still uncomfortable and the Worshipful Master should reinforce this guidance in the Trestleboard Notice to his membership.
- **Degree Work:** There has been much Degree work going on in the jurisdiction and I encourage Lodges to schedule this with their Candidates. Though the balance of the restrictions on Degree work are now removed, there are two particular places in the Ritual/Degree work that I want to continue to practice an additional layer of safety:
 - Passing the Grand Masonic Word – this is again being allowed however I am requiring the Master, Wardens, and Deacons involved in this portion of the work, to wear cotton gloves and masks for this portion only.
 - Degree Work and contact with Candidates – I am requiring the Master, Wardens, and Deacons who have close contact with the Candidate to wear cotton gloves and masks when performing the work. I would also highly encourage the Candidate to wear a mask if he is comfortable in doing so.
- **Meals:** Meals are now allowed for Lodges whether they are for private Lodge or public events both indoors and outside. However, all servers must still wear masks and food-service gloves while preparing and serving food. I would recommend Lodges continue to follow the previous guidance for meal preparation and serving which stated that only a certain number of Brethren be involved in the preparation and serving of meals.
- **Hall Usage:** Lodges should continue to be cleaned before and after each Lodge meeting to limit potential spread of the virus. This includes but is not limited to the Lodge Room and dining hall.

Brethren, we have continued to remain safe in this jurisdiction from the directives provided by M.W. Kenneth A. Clay Jr., PGM. We are now at a time when the state and country are in a much better place which allows me to significantly reduce the requirements that have been in place for over a year now.

I am asking for your continued vigilance in adhering to the local and state guidelines to ensure that all of our members and guests have a safe experience in the Lodges across this jurisdiction.

Sincerely and Fraternaly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David S. Collins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David S. Collins
Grand Master