



November 18, 2020

Brethren:

“Explosion” is the word being used by health professionals to describe the current increase in COVID-19 cases in Minnesota. The Governor’s office has begun to ratchet back meeting capacities for groups like ours, and you’ve doubtless noticed a spate of canceled special events and ceremonies. Since the safety of our members is paramount we should rightly follow those leads, and with consensus from the Grand Lodge’s COVID Committee I am here to announce amendments to the “Returning to In-Person Masonry” edict. The changes follow, but at the behest of the COVID Committee I begin with this plea:

**Stay home from Lodge if you’re sick.  
Maintain your distance, wear your mask, and wash your hands.  
Take care, and watch out for one another.**

These are the updates:

1. With respect to gatherings at a Lodge:
  - A. No in-person gathering held indoors may exceed 25 people or 50% of total capacity, whichever is lower.
  - B. In-person Lodge activities held indoors will be limited to 60-minutes in length.
  - C. In accordance with the latest Stay Safe MN requirements for our designated setting: “People attending a meeting must not mingle or socialize before or after the meeting, as this type of contact creates an increased risk of transmission.”
  - D. The Grand Lodge strongly advises all Installations of Lodge Officers to be held online (see #13 in the updated Grand Lodge of Minnesota COVID-19 Preparedness Policy for additional details).
2. With respect to Degrees, all remaining degree conferrals for 2020 have been postponed. New tentative dates have been selected for the rescheduled EA degrees in Duluth (1/23/2021) and Rochester (1/30/2021). A final decision whether to further delay these events will be made on January 8<sup>th</sup>.

Our COVID Committee is continuing to monitor the situation and will be meeting regularly to review the latest data and recommendations from MDH, examine suggestions from members, and lend me advice. If you have suggestions, questions or concerns about the Grand Lodge’s COVID plans, please send them through your District Representative to the Grand Lodge office who will forward them on to the committee.

As I have said now so often, there’s not a single one of us who delights in any of these measures. All I can do is thank each and every one of you for your patience, for all your extra efforts to clean and to distance and to sanitize, and for the resolute way you’ve borne it all. You are truly Masons, each and every one.

Fraternal regards,

Ethan A. Seaberg  
Grand Master



# GRAND LODGE OF MINNESOTA

## ANCIENT FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS

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### COVID-19 Preparedness Plan

**General Information:** The COVID-19 virus is contagious for at least three days before a person may feel any symptoms, and some infected individuals will never become symptomatic. Tests are not 100% reliable. Therefore, this COVID-19 preparedness plan for in-person Lodge activity is meant for the safety of the members of the Masonic fraternity in Minnesota.

The COVID-19 Preparedness Plan is administered by Grand Master Ethan A. Seaberg, who maintains the overall authority and responsibility for the plan. However, officers and members are equally responsible for supporting, implementing, complying with and providing recommendations to further improve all aspects of this COVID-19 Preparedness Plan.

The Grand Lodge of Minnesota's COVID-19 Preparedness Plan follows the industry guidance developed by the state of Minnesota, available at the Stay Safe Minnesota website (<https://staysafe.mn.gov>), which is based upon Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) guidelines for COVID-19, Minnesota Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MNOSHA) statutes, rules and standards, and Minnesota's relevant and current executive orders. It addresses:

- ensuring sick members stay home and prompt identification and isolation of sick persons;
- social distancing – members must be at least six-feet apart;
- member hygiene and source controls, including face coverings;
- lodge building and ventilation protocol;
- lodge cleaning and disinfection protocol.

The Grand Lodge of Minnesota has reviewed and incorporated the industry guidance applicable to our business provided by the state of Minnesota for the development of this plan, including the following industry guidance **“Places of worship, religious services, weddings, and funerals”**.

#### I. GENERAL REGULATIONS

- (1) Orders and guidelines from the federal, state and local governments are to be followed.
- (2) Edicts from the Grand Master of Minnesota are to be adhered to.
- (3) The Minnesota Masonic Code governs all Masonic matters.

Questions regarding anything not covered by these three General Regulations are to be submitted through the District Representative to the Grand Lodge office.

#### II. MEETINGS

- (1) Electronic meetings not involving any part of the Ritual, or not needing a tyler, are recommended and encouraged for social interaction, education (webinars), officer planning meetings, and committee meetings, etc. Examples of electronic platforms to use for this purpose are: Zoom, Group Meet, Facebook Messenger Rooms, Google Hangouts, Skype, and Webex. Regular tyled lodge meetings cannot be held electronically, and business that must be conducted by lodge vote is covered case-by-case under Grand Master dispensation.



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(2) In-person meetings must comply with all criteria on the COVID-19 Meeting Compliance checklist and this Covid-19 Preparedness Plan.

- **Beginning November 19, 2020, no in-person meeting may exceed 25 people or 50% of total capacity, whichever is lower.**
- **In-person Lodge meetings will be limited to 60-minutes in length**
- In accordance with the latest Stay Safe MN requirements for our designated setting:  
**“People attending a meeting must not mingle or socialize before or after the meeting, as this type of contact creates an increased risk of transmission.”**
- The Grand Lodge strongly recommends all Lodge Officer Installations to be held online. (see #13 for more information on installations)

(3) Sanitize the building before and after meetings. Clean all touched surfaces, including: door handles, countertops, barriers, railings, handles, tops of chairs, microphones, building phone, faucets, rods, gavels etc. Consider putting flexible poly over light switches to safely and easily clean a switch area. Meetings should be limited to be every third day, unless additional sanitization protocols have been implemented.

(4) Social distancing of six feet must be maintained during all in-person lodge activities. Handshakes, elbow-bumps, or other forms of physical contact are prohibited.

(5) Until further notice, masks must be worn before entering a Lodge building and at all times while in the building.

(6) Lodges are advised to post the MN Department of Health’s Screening Checklist at the building entrance. It is also recommended the lodge station someone at the door to remind members of masking requirements, offer masks to any who don’t already have, and to offer and encourage the use of hand sanitizer.

(7) Members are required to conduct a self-screening at home before attending any in-person lodge meeting. Anyone feeling unwell, showing symptoms of illness, or who may have been exposed to someone with symptoms of illness must be sent home. A non-contact temperature check and secondary screening is highly recommended on entering a facility.

(8) No food or beverages are to be served indoors at meetings until further notice, and no shared drink stations are allowed. Remember that masks are to be worn at all times inside Lodge buildings.

- a) Closed water bottles may be brought to and used in the lodge building.
- b) Prepackaged food is allowed as a meal before a lodge meeting provided that all distancing requirements are met, and the food is consumed outdoors (such as the parking lot).
- c) Takeaway food offered for sale as a Lodge fundraiser is allowed under the following rules:
  - All distancing is adhered to in both the creation and distribution of the food.
  - The food is considered a “drive through/pick-up” and not consumed on site.
  - The state and federal guidelines for food preparation are followed.
  - When possible, use a prepaid or 3rd party source for paying for food/sales so money is not handled at the sale.
  - All required government licensing is obtained be either the lodge or by the building owner.



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- The least amount of contact among the kitchen staff and singular tasks be used by the staff to not have multiple people contacting each other or the food ingredients.
- Use physical dividers where possible.
- When possible, food is to be slid to the purchaser rather than handed.
- If there are questions, they should be directed to the Grand Secretary through his office.

(9) Only one person should be in a restroom at a time. The smaller the space, the higher the likelihood of passing on the virus.

(10) No singing or wind instruments are allowed.

(11) To ensure 6-foot distancing, Lodges may only be opened on the First Degree. Attendance will be taken by roll call, and not by the use of a communal sign-in sheet or shared writing material. Minutes can be sent through Grand View, or by email, or by posting, or be read and approved at the meeting. Do not hand-distribute copies.

(12) **Ballot Box protocols** - The use of a ballot box for voting on petitions requires additional safety protocols to be followed. Any lodge using a ballot box must follow these steps.

- Once cleared, the ballot box will be placed in an open position, on a small table west of the altar. A bottle of hand sanitizer will also be placed on the table, next to the ballot box, for use by each member of the lodge before/after voting.
- The WM comes down (others can remain seated at direction of WM) inspects the box and votes.
- The SW and JW in succession go to the ballot box and vote.
- Each member in attendance from the left of the master counterclockwise goes and casts his ballot following the same procedures including sanitizer (A line may be formed using proper 6-foot social distancing).
- When all have voted, the Master inquires of the SD if all members voted, and if so, the WM declares ballot closed.
- JW immediately proceeds to the table, inspects the ballot, returns to seat, and gives report. The SW goes to inspect the ballot, returns to the West, and gives report.
- The Master retrieves the ballot box, destroys the ballot, returns to the East and gives the proper announcement (knock).
- The SD returns to his place.

(13) **Installation of Lodge Officers** – An installation of lodge officers is required by the MN Masonic Code (Section G13.29) to consummate the annual election. This applies whether, or not, new officers have been elected. The Grand Lodge strongly recommends all Lodge Officer Installations should be held online. Grand Lodge Officers will be available to attend as a guest or participant in your online installation.

Installations may still be held in person, although it is not recommended. If an in-person installation is held, the attendance limit is 25 people, and the Lodge must comply with the 2020 Installation guidelines in Appendix B.



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### III. DEGREE WORK

#### **NO DEGREE WORK SHALL BE PERFORMED BY A LOCAL LODGE.**

Regional degree conferrals are being tentatively scheduled for 2021 with actors as principal candidates, participants screened to minimize risk, and held in venues that allow space for social distancing.

### IV. BUILDING USE

This is the responsibility of the owner/manager of the building if not owned by the lodge.

- (1) Renters of separate, non-shared spaces are to meet the requirements of the state for opening the different types of establishments.
- (2) In shared space, the renter should have a copy of lodge operating procedures.
- (3) For single event renting of a shared space with the lodge, the procedures required by the lodges should be included as part of the agreement. (This could also apply to other organizations that use the lodge building on a regular basis such as OES and concordant bodies.)
- (4) Two days of non-use of the building should be maintained between activities, unless the Lodge has implemented additional sanitization protocols and has the explicit, written permission of the Grand Master.
- (5) All non-masonic sponsored uses not already contracted, should have an agreement which requires the user to follow the rules of operation for Masonic events and either be required to clean and sanitize immediately after the event or be charged for having someone sanitize the facility to protect the lodges and buildings.
- (6) Fresh air should continually be added to communal spaces in the building. Air should be blown out of the room so that fresh air is drawn into the room. Air streams should never blow toward or across people in the building. These procedures create movement of air that helps move any of the virus carrying mediums away from people rather than toward or recirculated where people are located in the building.

#### Recommendations (if applicable to your situation and to the extent possible)

- a) Supplement ventilation system with the use of portable HEPA filter units.
- b) Keep systems running longer hours (24/7 if possible) to enhance the ability to filter contaminants out of the air.
- c) Maintain relative humidity levels of RH 40-60%.
- d) Add a flush cycle to the controls of the HVAC system, and run HVAC systems for 2 hours before and after occupancy if your system allows for this.
- e) Check and rebalance the HVAC system to provide negative air pressure whenever possible.
- f) Consult an HVAC professional or the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers to ensure proper ventilation is provided, and ventilation systems are properly maintained. See Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response Resources from ASHRAE and Others ([www.ashrae.org/technical-resources/resources](http://www.ashrae.org/technical-resources/resources)).

### V. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT



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Lodges should first seek to source personal protective equipment (PPE), in the form of items like masks and hand sanitizer, in their communities. Consult with your local hospital, medical clinic, pharmacy, OES chapter, or church to find a PPE vendor in your area.

If supplies cannot be found in your community, it is possible to obtain PPE through the Grand Lodge office, though significant lead times may be required so please plan accordingly.

### **VII. AMENDMENTS**

Finally, this is intended to be a living document as conditions and requirements seems to change with little notice. If members of our Craft discover resources and recommendations that would both improve this policy and increase the safety of the members of this Fraternity, they are strongly encouraged to submit those resources to the Grand Lodge office for immediate consideration.



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### Appendix A – Guidance for developing a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan

#### General

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): Coronavirus (COVID-19) – [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV)

Minnesota Department of Health (MDH): Coronavirus – [www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus)

State of Minnesota: COVID-19 response – <https://mn.gov/covid19>

#### Businesses

CDC: Resources for businesses and employers – [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html)

CDC: General business frequently asked questions – [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/general-business-faq.html)

CDC: Building/business ventilation – [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html)

MDH: Businesses and employers: COVID-19 – [www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/businesses.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/businesses.html)

MDH: Food safety protocols - <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safedining.pdf>

MDH: Health screening checklist – [www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf)

MDH: Materials for businesses and employers – [www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/materials](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/materials)

Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED): COVID-19 information and resources – <https://mn.gov/deed/newscenter/covid/>

Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI): Updates related to COVID-19 – [www.dli.mn.gov/updates](http://www.dli.mn.gov/updates)

Federal OSHA – [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)

#### Handwashing

MDH: Handwashing video translated into multiple languages – [www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdQuPGVcceg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdQuPGVcceg)

#### Respiratory etiquette: Cover your cough or sneeze

CDC: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html)

CDC: [www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/etiquette/coughing\\_sneezing.html](http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/etiquette/coughing_sneezing.html)

MDH: [www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html)

#### Social distancing

CDC: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html)



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MDH: [www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/businesses.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/businesses.html)

## Housekeeping

CDC: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html)

CDC: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html)

CDC: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html)

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): [www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2](http://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2)

## Employees exhibiting signs and symptoms of COVID-19

CDC: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html)

MDH: [www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/basics.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/basics.html)

MDH: [www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf)

MDH: [www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/returntowork.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/returntowork.pdf)

State of Minnesota: <https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/if-sick/get-tested/index.jsp>

## Training

CDC: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-small-business.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-small-business.html)

Federal OSHA: [www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf](http://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf)

MDH: [www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/about.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/about.pdf)



# COVID-19 MEETING COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST

This meeting complies with all GL edicts

This meeting complies with current state and local orders

The lodge has certified its compliance with the official Grand Lodge of Minnesota Covid-19 Preparedness Plan

This meeting will not exceed 25 people in attendance

Two days have passed since the last use of the building/space

A sign has been posted at the building entrance requiring masks be worn

This meeting will not last more than 60 minutes

Anyone experiencing illness or elevated temperatures has been asked to stay/return home

Hand sanitizer is located at the door and its use is being strongly encouraged

A six-foot social distance will be maintained

No food is being served indoors.

The Lodge will be opened on the First Degree

No degree work will be conferred

Meeting attendance will be taken without contact, by roll call or other methods

Use of the ballot box complies with the Covid-19 Ballot Box Protocols

Minutes and other reports will be reviewed without contact, either electronically or read aloud

All touched surfaces, including doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, Deacons rods, etc., have been cleaned before use and will be cleaned again after use

Have a good meeting!



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## Appendix B - 2020 Installation of Lodge Officers Guidelines

If the installation is to be public, all edicts of the Grand Master and the Governor shall be obeyed. Including but not limited to, masks, social distancing, sanitization, etc.

No food or beverage shall be served. Closed water bottles may be brought to and used in the Lodge building, and pre-packaged food is permissible for consumption outside the lodge building.

Prior to the Installation, private OR public, the lodge shall be set up in the following manner:

- Collars shall be placed on a table in front of the altar, not touching and properly sanitized.
- Deacon's and Steward's rods, Marshal's baton, Tyler's Sword, and Master's gavel shall be placed on a table or suitable holding device to the North of the altar, not touching and properly sanitized.
- The Master to be installed shall have an additional hat in the East
- The charter shall be displayed in front of the Master's chair or properly hung on the wall
- By-Laws shall be in a visible location from the East and the Altar.
- Officer's chairs shall be no less than 6' from each other. If necessary, a second row of chairs may be needed.

### Installation of Officers

- The Installing Officers are in their proper places with the exception of the Chaplain who shall be seated in the Treasurer's place for the ceremony unless there is a proper amount of room to be 6' from the Master's chair.
- When the Marshall is directed to present the officer to the Altar (on the West side of the table with jewels), he is to motion the individual being requested, or the next officer to be installed to present himself at the Altar.
- When the officer being installed is invested with his jewel, the officer will take his jewel from the table and put it around his own neck.
- When the Master is presented with his Gavel, the Installing Master will come down from the East, from the South of the Altar and when he "presents" the gavel, he will motion to the gavel on the table for the Master being Installed, to pick up. While maintaining a social distance, the Master being installed will follow the Installing Master to the East and continue the ceremony. It may be necessary for the Master being installed to take a seat as close to the East as possible while maintaining a social distance.
- The Deacon's, Steward's, Marshall, and Tyler, when presented with their instruments, the Marshall shall motion for the officer to take the instrument.
- All officers will follow the Marshall to their place or station and shall be seated in their proper place or station or as close to possibly practicable if too close to another officer.