



March 1, 2021

Brethren:

As this message relates to COVID-19, please let me to begin by reiterating what our Grand Lodge's COVID Committee has been asking us all to remember since March:

**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.**

While unfortunately nowhere near time yet to let down our viral guard, as caseloads and infection rates decrease we're able to make some important changes in Minnesota Masonry's response to the pandemic. These changes are driven by recent updates to Stay Safe MN guidelines for organizations like ours, and I refer you to those resources for specifics.

The updates in our attached COVID Preparedness Plan relate almost exclusively to food in Lodge buildings, and I'll attempt to summarize the changes here:

(1) In all things, food-related or not, please remember to maintain a 6' social distance. That requirement is the foundation of this update.

(2) While we will now allow food in Lodges, the COVID Committee correctly asks me to emphasize that their preference is for Brothers to break bread at local restaurants rather than in the Lodge. The reasons are many, and range from supporting critical community businesses to spending less time in Lodge buildings thereby decreasing the risk of exposure there.

(3) I mentioned 6' spacing previously, and that comes to bear here. While Stay Safe MN guidelines now allow us to have dinner, unlike in restaurants we may not sit within 6' of each other. Brothers from different households must maintain spacing, so please rearrange your dining area accordingly.

(4) The COVID Committee recommends, and I concur, that to begin no food may be prepared in the building. This condition is driven by a desire to limit the amount of time in the kitchen and is intended to be removed as vaccination rates rise and infection rates fall.

(5) Food must not be self-served, and again 6' spacing must be maintained at all times. So if pizza were ordered, as an example, the server would plate a Brother's choice and he would then pick it up from the end of a counter and carry it to his place.

(6) Hand sanitizer must be set at each dining table, and bottles be liberally placed throughout the building to encourage their use.

(7) And importantly to the matter of coffee, the engine of Freemasonry. Taking a cue from the convention sector, coffee may again be made available in Lodge buildings as long as a bottle of hand sanitizer sits next to the pot and is used by all before pouring. [And in case you're thinking about a

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Grand Master 2020-2021

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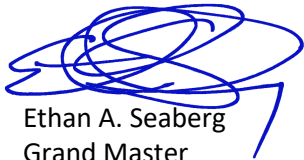


cookie with that coffee, baked goods can be individually plated and picked up separately for dunking in the cup.]

As you have suggestions, questions, or concerns about the Grand Lodge's COVID plans please continue to send them through your District Representative to the Grand Lodge office.

While I can't help but be gladdened by our incremental return to a semblance of Masonic normality, I am also cognizant of those we've lost to this pandemic. I thank you all once again for your resolution to keep Minnesota Masonry as safe as we're able, and look forward to the time when I am able to shake your hand and say as much in person.

Fraternal regards,



Ethan A. Seaberg
Grand Master



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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.

- No in-person lodge activity may exceed 50% of total capacity
- It is recommended that in-person Lodge meetings be limited to 60-minutes in length

(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) Food and beverages (indoors or outdoors) are allowed to be served at meetings under the following guidelines. Remember that masks are to be worn at all times, when not eating or drinking, inside Lodge buildings.

- Dining at local restaurants is preferred over dining at lodge. The reasons are many and range from supporting critical community businesses to spending less time in Lodge buildings thereby decreasing the risk of exposure there.
- Stay Safe MN guidelines require individuals from different households to maintain 6' spacing, so please rearrange your dining area accordingly.
- No food may be prepared in Lodge buildings for consumption at the lodge. The only food that may be prepared on-site is food being sold as a takeaway fundraiser (see #9 for food fundraisers).
- Food consumed on-site must not be self-served, and 6' spacing must be maintained at all times. *[If pizza were ordered, the server would plate a member's selection and he would then pick it up from the end of a counter and carry it to his dining place.]*
- Hand sanitizer must be set at each dining tables and bottles be liberally placed throughout the building to encourage their use.
- Coffee may be made available in Lodge buildings as long as a bottle of hand sanitizer sits next to the pot and is used by all before pouring.



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(9) Rules for food fundraisers:

- The food is considered a “drive through/pick-up” and not consumed on site
- All distancing is adhered to in both the creation and distribution of the food
- 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 by either the lodge or by the building owner
- 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

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

(11) No singing or wind instruments are allowed.

(12) 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.

(13) 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.



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III. DEGREE WORK

NO DEGREE WORK SHALL BE PERFORMED BY A LOCAL LODGE.

Regional degree conferrals for the EA and FC degrees are being 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).



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V. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

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

Minnesota Department of Health (MDH): Coronavirus – 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

CDC: General business frequently asked questions – 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

MDH: Businesses and employers: COVID-19 – 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

MDH: Materials for businesses and employers – 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

Federal OSHA – www.osha.gov

Handwashing

MDH: Handwashing video translated into multiple languages – 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

CDC: www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/etiquette/coughing_sneezing.html

MDH: www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html

Social distancing

CDC: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html

MDH: www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/businesses.html



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Housekeeping

CDC: 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

CDC: 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

Employees exhibiting signs and symptoms of COVID-19

CDC: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html

MDH: www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/basics.html

MDH: www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf

MDH: 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

Federal OSHA: www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf

MDH: www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/about.pdf

COVID-19 MEETING COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST



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- ✓ 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 50% capacity with 6-foot distancing
- ✓ 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

- ✓ 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

- ✓ 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!