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TO ALCOAST

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COMDTNOTE 5100

SUBJ: GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF CLOTH FACE COVERINGS

A. Novel Coronavirus Planning Order (series)

B. COMDT COGARD WASHINGTON DC 262013 MAR 20/ALCOAST 107/20

C. COMDT COGARD WASHINGTON DC 051738 APR 20/ALCOAST 122/20

1. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) is committed to ensuring the health and safety of active and reserve forces, civilian employees, NAF employees, contactors, Auxiliaries, and their families, and the nation, in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic. The USCG will continue to implement measures to mitigate risks to the spread of the disease.

2. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult or impossible to maintain, especially in areas of significant community-based transmission. The CDC recommendation may be viewed at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>. As such, all members and employees of the CG family and their family members are encouraged to follow CDC guidelines while off-duty. CDC generated a list of FAQs regarding cloth face covering at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-faq.html>. Additional guidance for making, wearing and storing face coverings is available at: <https://www.uscg.mil/coronavirus/>.

3. Policy. Effective immediately, to the extent practical as determined by unit CO's/OIC's, when onboard USCG assets, property, facility, installation, or when conducting official USCG business in a public setting where social distancing measures are not able to be maintained, all Coast Guard personnel are required to wear cloth face covering when they cannot appropriately social distance themselves from others by maintaining six feet of physical separation.

4. Mask Selection. Due to extremely limited supplies in PPE, surgical masks should be worn as a last resort and only with command concurrence. N95 respirators shall not be used for this purpose. The following guidance on mask selection applies:

a. For initial implementation, either home-fabricated or personally procured non-medical cloth face coverings following CDC guidance are acceptable. Homemade and do-it-yourself (DIY) cloth masks or personally-procured are the preferred option for non-operational use.

b. Face coverings are approved for wear in uniform. Cloth face coverings of neutral solid coloring (e.g. navy blue, black, gray or white) are preferred. However, other colors and patterns are permitted if they are workplace appropriate.

c. Surgical masks are an acceptable alternative only when other face coverings are not available and mission essential functions cannot be accomplished within social distance guidelines, and only when unit level supplies are robust enough to support response and medical operations. Conservation of surgical masks is critical.

5. Mask Fit and Wear. Proper fit and wear will increase the effectiveness of face coverings. Face covering provides source control: My mask protects you, your mask protects me.

a. Face coverings should fit snugly, but comfortably against the side of the face; be secure with ties or ear loops; include multiple layers of fabric; allow for breathing without restriction; and able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change in shape.

b. Face coverings must not be shared.

c. Members must be careful not to touch the areas near the nose and mouth, particularly when taking the face covering off.

6. Post-use and preservation: After removal, specific precautions should be taken to decrease the risk of virus transmission through handling and storage of face coverings.

a. When not wearing the cover, it should be stored in a place that only the user will come in contact with to avoid contaminating surfaces. Before and after removing or handling the face cover, members should immediately wash their hands.

b. The face cover should be washed in a washing machine as often as practical.

7. Exceptions. Exception to the face-covering requirement can be approved by local commanders and OICs based on unusual situations, operational restrictions, or difficulty meeting the requirement due to supply.

8. Additional Precautions.

a. Security checkpoints may require the lowering of masks to verify identification.

b. Face covering does not reduce the need to conduct proper hand hygiene and avoidance of touching one's face.

c. Members should not assume that face covering is an effective, stand-alone method of protection. Face covering is in addition to, not in lieu of, social distance and restriction of movement guidelines. Members should not change their approach toward activities involving gatherings of people. Be vigilant and work to avoid large groups, maintain social distancing, and don't let your guard down.

9. The USCG Chief Medical Officer will continually evaluate updated medical and occupational health information and will issue updated health protection guidance as appropriate.

10. RADM Dana Thomas, Chief Medical Officer and Director, Health Safety and Work-life, sends.

11. Internet release is authorized.