

CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA
EMERGENCY ORDINANCE NO. 2021-24

AN EMERGENCY ORDINANCE OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA REQUIRING USE
OF A FACE COVERING IN CERTAIN INDOOR SETTINGS AND PROVIDING A PENALTY

BE IT ENACTED by the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka as follows:

1. **CLASSIFICATION.** This emergency ordinance is not of a permanent nature and is not intended to be a part of the Sitka General Code (SGC) of the City and Borough of Sitka.

2. **SEVERABILITY.** If any provision of this emergency ordinance and application thereof to any person and circumstances is held invalid, the remainder of this emergency ordinance and application thereof to any person and circumstances shall not be affected thereby.

3. **PURPOSE.** The purpose of this emergency ordinance is recited as follows:

WHEREAS, COVID-19 is a respiratory disease that can result in serious illness or death and is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (“virus”); and

WHEREAS, a new strain of the coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans and is easily transmittable person to person has appeared and is known as the “Delta variant”; and

WHEREAS, the Delta variant is now the dominant strain in Alaska, and the Delta variant is substantially more contagious than earlier strains; and

WHEREAS, a substantial portion of the new cases of COVID-19 are of vaccinated people and it has been proven that while vaccinated people do not get as sick, they can infect others; and

WHEREAS, Sitka is experiencing a substantial increase in COVID-19 cases, as evidenced by the change in our COVID-19 alert status from moderate to high on July 5, and since that time Sitka has remained in the high alert status with steady positive tests and hospitalizations, and even a resident death; and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the State of Alaska recommend that when infection rates are high everyone wear a face covering, including vaccinated people, when in a public setting where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.

4. **ENACTMENT.** NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ENACTED by the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka that:

Section 1. Face Covering Mandate.

(A) Requirement. All individuals must wear a face covering over their nose and mouth when they are indoors in public settings or communal spaces outside the home. This ordinance is subject to the conditions and exceptions stated below.

51 (B) Context. The settings included in this ordinance include, but are not limited to, the public and
52 communal spaces within the following:

53 (1) Grocery stores, pharmacies, and all other retail stores.

54 (2) Restaurants, cafes, bars, and breweries – including food preparation, carry-out, and delivery
55 food operations. There is a limited exception for customers while they are actively eating or
56 drinking in one of these settings.

57 (3) Buses, taxis, and other forms of public transportation when passengers are present.

58 (4) Personal care facilities.

59 (5) Child care facilities.

60 (6) Communal areas of offices where people from multiple households are present, such as
61 elevators and indoor communal spaces in other buildings.

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63 (C) Employment. Employers are responsible to make sure employees who are present in the
64 workplace wear face coverings when in direct contact with customers, members of the public, or
65 other employees. Face coverings are not required when the only direct contact is between
66 members of the same household or when employees are not near others (within six feet).

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68 (D) Exceptions. This ordinance does not apply to the following categories of people or activities:

69 (1) Any child under the age of 2 years. These very young children should not wear a face
70 covering because of the risk of suffocation.

71 (2) Any individual for whom wearing a face covering would be contrary to his or her health or
72 safety because of a medical condition or mental health condition, and any individual unable to
73 tolerate a face covering due to a physical or mental disability.

74 (3) Individuals who are speech impaired, deaf, or hard of hearing, or individuals communicating
75 with someone who is deaf or hard of hearing, where facial or mouth movements are an integral
76 part of communication.

77 (4) Any individual who has trouble breathing or is otherwise unable to remove the face covering
78 without assistance.

79 (5) Individuals who are incarcerated, in police custody, or inside a courtroom. These individuals
80 should follow guidance particular to their location or institution.

81 (6) Individuals performing an activity that cannot be conducted or safely conducted while
82 wearing a face covering (for example, a driver experiencing foggy glasses, a dental patient
83 receiving care, swimming, an equipment operator where there is a risk of dangerous
84 entanglement).

85 (7) Musicians, presenters, ministers, and others communicating to an audience or being
86 recorded, for the duration of their presentation/practice/performance where face covering usage
87 impairs communication, and so long as safe physical distancing is maintained.

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89 (E) Proof of Medical Reason or Disability. If a person declines to wear a face covering because
90 of a medical condition or disability as described above, this ordinance does not require them to
91 produce medical documentation verifying the stated condition or disability. Businesses may wish
92 to consider accommodating such individuals through curbside or delivery service or by allowing
93 the individual inside without a face covering if doing so will not place others at risk.

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95 (F) Enforcement Policy. The City and Borough of Sitka reserves the right to use all available
96 enforcement options to assure compliance with this ordinance. However, employers will not be
97 subject to fines based on non-compliance by customers so long as there is a clearly posted sign
98 informing customers that they are required to wear face coverings. Brief removal of a face
99 covering, such as is necessary to eat, drink, or scratch an itch does not constitute a violation of
100 this ordinance (although hand washing/sanitizing is recommended after such activities).

101 Additionally, violation of this ordinance does not create grounds for residents to harass
102 individuals who do not comply with it.

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104 (G) Violation. A person who violates the face covering requirement of this section shall be
105 subject to a civil fine of \$50.00, which shall be considered incorporated into SGC, Chapter 1.12
106 "General Penalty." Payment of the civil fine shall be accepted in satisfaction of the violation;
107 and the violation shall be subject to SGC, Chapter 1.12.

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109 **5. EMERGENCY DECLARATION:** The Assembly hereby finds that the facts and
110 legislative findings set forth above in Section 3 constitute an emergency as required by the
111 Home Rule Charter of the City and Borough of Sitka, Section 3.03 "Emergency Ordinances."

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113 **6. EFFECTIVE DATE.** This emergency ordinance shall become effective on the day it is
114 adopted and expires if and when the risk level as defined by the Sitka Emergency Operations
115 Center is moderate during times before August 24, 2021, or at midnight on August 24, 2021, the
116 date of the second regular meeting of the Assembly in August, whichever occurs first. If the risk
117 level is still high it will be on the Assembly agenda for possible renewal on August 24, 2021.

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119 **PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED** by the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka this
120 29th day of July, 2021.

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123 _____
124 Steven Eisenbeisz, Mayor

125 ATTEST:

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128 Sara Peterson, MMC
129 Municipal Clerk

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131 1st and final reading – 7/29/2021 in accordance with Home Rule Charter, Section 3.03.

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133 This emergency ordinance is pre-scheduled for the regular meeting of the Assembly on
134 8/24/2021 to consider re-enactment upon its expiration.

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136 Sponsors: Christianson / Himschoot / Duncan