

**THE GRAND LODGE**  
ANCIENT FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS  
**OF MINNESOTA**



**ETHAN A. SEABERG**

Grand Master 2020-2021

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June 30, 2020

Brethren:

The State of Minnesota moved to Phase III of its COVID-19 Stay Safe MN plan in mid-June. That plan is broken down by "Setting", as in social or business, etc., and the Grand Lodge sought clarification from the State on which setting was a best fit for Masonic Lodges. We were given a few options from which to choose, and our COVID Committee recommended selecting "Places of Worship, religious services, weddings, and funerals". While I naturally hesitate to equate Freemasonry with religion, operationally our Lodges are quite similar to places of worship (though for the sake of emphasis I will qualify without dogma, sacrament, or promised paths to salvation).

With the previous information in mind, I hereby authorize the following updates to the May 28th, 2020 "Returning to In-Person Masonry" edict:

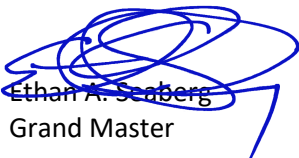
(1) Constituent Lodges shall be considered "Places of Worship, religious services, weddings, and funerals" for the purpose of determining meeting capacity. Currently the capacity is set at 50%, though that percentage and all other COVID restrictions and guidance are subject to change.

(2) Lodges wishing to open shall do so under the terms and conditions of the attached "Grand Lodge of Minnesota – COVID-19 Preparedness Plan" dated July 1st, 2020. Among the changes from May's document, including naming it our Preparedness Plan for the purpose of Stay Safe MN compliance, its most substantive update is a provision for balloting on petitions for the Degrees of Freemasonry.

While this move to 50% capacity will allow most of us to meet in Lodge once again, it cannot be as before the pandemic. Social distancing will be maintained, masks will be worn, and cleaning will continue. Please make liberal use of the Covid-19 Meeting Compliance checklist for quick reference. [Note: if your local Fire Marshal has not calculated maximum capacity for your Lodge spaces, a resource is linked for that purpose on the bottom of the checklist.]

As I have done previously, I thank both our COVID Committee and the Masons of Minnesota for working so hard to keep Masonry, and our dear Masonic family, as safe as we're able. Please contact your District Representatives should you have specific questions in this pandemic environment, and I pray for your continued health and safety as we wade through this viral time together.

Fraternal regards,



Ethan A. Seaberg  
Grand Master

# COVID-19 MEETING COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST



## GRAND LODGE ANCIENT FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS OF MINNESOTA

11501 Masonic Home Drive, Bloomington, MN 55437  
(952) 948-6709 • (800) 245-6050 • [office@grandlodgemn.org](mailto:office@grandlodgemn.org)

✓ 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 capacity limits for 'religious organizations' as defined by the Stay Safe MN Plan<sup>(1,2)</sup>

✓ 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

✓ Neither meals nor refreshments are being served

✓ 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!

<sup>1</sup>Check today's capacity limits at <https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/stay-safe-mn/stay-safe-plan.jsp>

<sup>2</sup> If your Lodge does not have a Fire Marshal posted capacity number, please use the following to calculate the total (non-Covid) capacity of your room - <https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/sfm/Documents/Occupancy-Load-Retail.pdf>

# GRAND LODGE OF MINNESOTA

## 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, these recommendations for in-person Lodge activity are meant for the safety of the members of the Masonic fraternity in Minnesota.

### 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 Grand Secretary to the Grand Master for his consideration.

### 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.
- (2) Constituent Lodges will follow the Stay Safe MN Plan setting for “Places of Worship, religious services, weddings, and funerals” in determining meeting capacity restrictions. In-person meetings must comply with all criteria on the COVID-19 Meeting Compliance checklist and this Covid-19 Preparedness Plan.
- (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) It is 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) 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 screening is highly recommended on entering a facility.
- (8) No food or beverages are to be served at meetings until further notice, and no shared drink stations are allowed. Have hand sanitizer at any water fountains and remember that masks are to be worn at all times.
- (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) 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 right of the master clockwise 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.

### **III. DEGREE WORK**

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

Regional degree conferrals are being considered 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 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.

## V. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

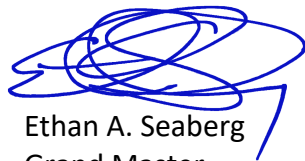
Lodges should first seek to source personal protective equipment (PPE), in the form of items like masks and hand sanitizer, in their communities. Consult with your local hospital, medical clinic, pharmacy, OES chapter, or church to find a PPE vendor in your area.

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.

Certified by:



Ethan A. Seaberg  
Grand Master  
7-1-2020

Lodge Certification:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **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: 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)

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)