

Preface

This piece was written by Brother Dr. Alvin Young PM of Acacia Lodge No. 11, Cheyenne. I know of Bro Al's experience and asked him to write this. Dr. Young spent more than 40 years in government and universities teaching environmental toxicology, risk management and public health. While in the Air Force, Colonel Young spent four years at the School of Aerospace Medicine in San Antonio studying epidemiology and the spreading of diseases. Brother Kelly Davis PM did some review for this piece.

Thank you, Brothers.
Fraternally,
Tom Hamm, GM

LIVING WITH COVID-19: A GUIDE FOR WYOMING MASONS

❖ GOAL

The goal of this guide is to assist Masonic Temples, Lodges, Clubs, and individual Masons in taking measures to slow the transmission of COVID-19 disease to protect themselves and their families who are at increased risk for severe illness, including older members and members of any age with underlying health conditions.

It is important that individual Lodges, Temples, and Clubs (e.g., Shrine Clubs) identify ways to ensure the safety and social well-being of their members.

❖ BACKGROUND AND SYMPTOMS FOR COVID-19 EXPOSURE

COVID-19 (Coronavirus disease 2019), virus strain: Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). What makes this virus so dangerous is that it was never detected/identified before November 2019; it is rapidly transmitted through the air on respiratory particles; it is viable for days on surfaces; and, thus it can spread like wildfire from a single contaminated individual in a crowd. Most importantly, there are no vaccines to prevent contracting the disease, nor are there currently any potentially antiviral drugs. It should be noted that FDA cautions against the use of chloroquine or hydroxychloroquine.

People with COVID-19 have a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. **Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus.** The symptoms may include:

- **Cough**
- **Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing**
- **Fever**
- **Chills**
- **Muscle pain**
- **Sore throat**
- **New loss of taste or smell**
- **Other less common symptoms include nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea**

Emergency warning signs for those infected with COVID-19 include:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face

If a Brother is showing any of these signs, seek emergency medical care immediately.

❖ **WHAT ARE THE HEALTH RISKS?**

A health risk is the chance or likelihood that COVID-19 will affect a member's health or that of his family. It would be ideal if risks to COVID-19 could be clearly defined. Information on this new virus, its rapid transmission and possible mitigation is being discovered almost daily. Unfortunately, the nature of our society's political system complicates the search for rational solutions to the risk issues associated with COVID-19. Yet there are opportunities to reduce scientific uncertainties and increase the public's confidence that their health is protected and that the economic consequences of imposed/recommended control measures are justified.

❖ **ARE THE RISKS LESS FOR MASONS LIVING IN WYOMING?**

Nationally, Wyoming has been classified as having one of the lowest numbers of positive cases of COVID-19. As of 15 May 2020, Wyoming has had 529 cases and 172 probable cases (pending laboratory confirmation). Of Wyoming's 23 counties, the largest number of cases are in Fremont County (35%), Laramie County (22%), Teton County (13%), and Natrona County (7%). The remaining 23% are scattered throughout the state. Currently there are no positive cases identified in Platte County (Wheatland) or Weston County (Newcastle). This does not imply that these two counties are free of the virus, rather testing may be inadequate to determine the frequency of positive cases. Laramie County (Cheyenne) borders Colorado, a state with high numbers of positive cases, while Fremont County (Riverton, Lander) includes the Wind River Indian Reservation where multigenerational living arrangements are more common. The Indian Health Service has initiated a testing and reporting program for positive cases. Thus, where members of Masonic Lodges located in Counties with few or no cases of COVID-19 may be at less risk, simply because fewer numbers of members are participating in their Masonic Lodge or Appendant Bodies, undetected positive cases may still be present.

❖ **MAINTAINING PERSONAL SAFE BEHAVIORAL PRACTICES**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the following actions to minimize exposure to the coronavirus:

- Stay home if sick, and avoid close contact with people who are sick,
- Practice Social Distancing by putting a distance, if possible, of six feet (two arms' length) between yourself and other people,
- When shopping or being in public places, wear a mask or scarf that covers your mouth and nose (gloves optional),
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after being in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol,

- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use the inside of your elbow, and,
- Clean and disinfect frequently touch surfaces to include cell phones, keyboards, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, toilets, faucets, and sinks.

❖ **REOPENING GUIDANCE FOR THE CLEANING AND DISINFECTING OF MASONIC LODGES, TEMPLES, OR CLUBS**

Effective 15 May 2020, The Governor of Wyoming updated state-wide orders to allow some dine-in services at restaurants and bars, but it was emphasized that social distancing and other public health measures, e.g. face coverings, should still be in place. In addition, gatherings of more than 25 people in a confined space will be banned, although some exceptions were extended to religious groups and funeral services that maintain social distancing.

Before reopening your Masonic Lodge, Temple, or Club, the Worshipful Master, Potentate, or President should develop a brief plan to implement and maintain their facility. Reducing the risk of exposure to COVID-19 is an important part of reopening the facility. The plan should include:

- A decision on minimizing the number of rooms/spaces that need to be opened for routine Masonic activities. Close off any rooms or portions of the facility that does not need to be open; this would include kitchens, surfaces, and objects that are not frequently touched, and hence would require more intensive cleaning and disinfecting if opened or used.
- Consider what items can be moved or removed completely to reduce frequent handling or contact from multiple people.
- Determine what needs to be disinfected or frequently cleaned. Examples of frequently touched surfaces or objects that will need routine disinfection would include items used in Masonic rituals, altars and coverings, aprons, bibles, gavels, pedestals, etc.

Requiring members to wear gloves, e.g., traditional white gloves, would minimize the need to disinfect most items in Lodge including doorknobs, handles, light switches, and chairs. Between Lodge meeting members should wash the gloves in soap and water.

- Consider the resources and equipment needed. Keep in mind the availability of cleaning and disinfection products. Keep sanitary sprays and wipes available for the members going and coming from Lodge.
- Implement and encourage the continue personal behavior practices for all members and guests.
- For Shrine Clubs and similar social gatherings keep clean and disinfect countertops and table surfaces, containers, faucets and sinks, handles, phones, toilets, and light switches.
- To reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 to a brother, face masks should be worn wherever it is impossible to maintain the recommended six-foot social distancing, for example when entering or exiting the lodge through a narrow doorway or when an officer's place in the lodge requires they sit closer than six feet apart.

When Masons have the facts, we can meet the challenges of COVID-19 with diligence and resolve, and without panic. We are encouraged to keep calm, and participate in our Masonic activities, ever remembering that our behavior practices mean's the difference between a brother feeling safe in Lodge or not!

- End Article -

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