



# News Release

**Thurston County Sheriff**  
**John Snaza**  
Phone-360-786-5500  
Fax-360-786-5275

*“People First; Public Safety  
Always”*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**Media Contact: Lt. Ray Brady, [ray.brady@co.thurston.wa.us](mailto:ray.brady@co.thurston.wa.us)**

**Headline: TCSO Response to Wearing Face Coverings**

Details: With the recent Governor’s announcement of mandatory masks, The Sheriff’s Office recommends that everyone continue exercising safe and precautionary measures as we work through this pandemic, including wearing masks around those in high-risk groups. Due to the minor nature of this offense, and the possibility for a negative outcome during an enforcement encounter and various ways in which the order may be violated, it would be inappropriate for deputies to criminally enforce this mandate. TCSO deputies will not be doing so, rather, we will continue to engage with people when appropriate, and educate them in partnership with our public health staff. Deputies will be trying to balance public safety with public health during these challenging times of COVID-19.

Each time we respond to a priority call for service or make a traffic stop, our deputies’ safety is our priority. Putting on the necessary precautionary equipment in an emergent response may delay them to provide assistance to a victim or jeopardize their own personal safety, so they will not be required to wear them. It’s a decision being left up to the individual deputy and situation they encounter. We have received complaints and concerns about deputies not wearing their masks, but we want the public to know we do review each of them along with encouraging them

to wear one. It's a judgment call when it could compromise deputy or citizen safety or make things safer to wear a mask.

We have never experienced this type of pandemic, so we are working with Thurston County Public Health to review and educate ourselves to make informed decisions by reviewing every situation when it needs to be addressed.

We have also received many inquiries regarding wearing a mask and carry a concealed firearm. You are authorized to wear a mask and carry a concealed firearm so long as you have a valid CPL and follow RCW 9.41.050. Keeping that in mind make sure to review RCW 9.41.300 for certain areas where firearms are prohibited.

We have a very responsive and considerate community, and we will work very hard to ensure we have one of the safest communities.