

**SAN DIEGO POLICE DEPARTMENT
ORDER**

DATE/TIME: DECEMBER 31, 2025 0610 HOURS
NUMBER: OR 25-33
SUBJECT: FACE COVERINGS (MASKS) FOR PERSONNEL
SCOPE: ALL SWORN MEMBERS OF THE DEPARTMENT
DEPARTMENT PROCEDURE AFFECTED: N/A

On September 20, 2025, SB 627 was signed into law, which is codified in California Penal Code section (PC)185.5 and California Government Code 7289. PC 185.5 prohibits peace officers from wearing a facial covering that conceals or obscures their facial identity while performing their duties, except as specified.

The San Diego Police Department is committed to transparency, accountability, and public trust and understands that the principle that generalized and undifferentiated fear and apprehension about officer safety shall not be sufficient to justify the use of facial coverings.

Effective immediately, all sworn members of the Department shall adhere to the requirements of Penal Code 185.5 during the performance of their duties and are restricted from the use of facial coverings as clearly defined in the statute.

PC 185.5 states:

- (a) A law enforcement officer shall not wear a facial covering that conceals or obscures their facial identity in the performance of their duties, except as expressly authorized in this section.
- (b)
 - (1) For purposes of this section, “facial covering” means any opaque mask, garment, helmet, headgear, or other item that conceals or obscures the facial identity of an individual, including, but not limited to, a balaclava, tactical mask, gator, ski mask, and any similar type of facial covering or face-shielding item.
 - (2) A “facial covering” does not include any of the following:
 - (A) A translucent face shield or clear mask that does not conceal the wearer’s facial identity and is used in compliance with the employing agency’s policy and procedures in Section 7289 of the Government Code.

- (B) A N95 medical mask or surgical mask to protect against transmission of disease or infection or any other mask, helmet, or device, including, but not limited to, air-purifying respirators, full or half masks, or self-contained breathing apparatus necessary to protect against exposure to any toxin, gas, smoke, inclement weather, or any other hazardous or harmful environmental condition.
 - (C) A mask, helmet, or device, including, but not limited to, a self-contained breathing apparatus, necessary for underwater use.
 - (D) A motorcycle helmet when worn by an officer utilizing a motorcycle or other vehicle that requires a helmet for safe operations while in the performance of their duties.
 - (E) Eyewear necessary to protect from the use of retinal weapons, including, but not limited to, lasers.
- (c) This section does not apply to either of the following:
- (1) An officer subject to one or more of the exemptions set forth in paragraph (3) of subdivision (b) of Section 7289 of the Government Code.
 - (2) An officer assigned to Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team units while actively performing their SWAT responsibilities.
- (d) A willful and knowing violation of this section is punishable as an infraction or a misdemeanor.
- (e) For the purposes of this section, “law enforcement officer” means a peace officer, as defined in Section 830, employed by a city, county, or other local agency as well as any officer or agent of a federal law enforcement agency or any law enforcement agency of another state or any person acting on behalf of a federal law enforcement agency or law enforcement agency of another state.
- (f) The criminal penalties in this section shall not apply to any law enforcement officer if they were acting in their capacity as an employee of the agency and the agency maintains and publicly posts, no later than July 1, 2026, a written policy pursuant to Section 7289 of the Government Code.
- (g) Notwithstanding any other law, any person who is found to have committed an assault, battery, false imprisonment, false arrest, abuse of process, or malicious prosecution, while wearing a facial covering in a knowing and willful violation of this section shall not be entitled to assert any privilege or immunity for their tortious conduct against a claim of civil liability, and shall be liable to that individual for the greater of actual

damages or statutory damages of not less than ten thousand dollars (\$10,000), whichever is greater.

Members of the public are also prohibited from wearing masks, false whiskers or other personal disguise in situations as described in California Penal Code section 185, which states, “It shall be unlawful for any person to wear any mask, false whiskers, or any personal disguise (whether complete or partial) for the purpose of:

- 1) Evading or escaping discovery, recognition, or identification in the commission of any public offense.
- 2) Concealment, flight, or escape, when charged with, arrested for, or convicted of, any public offense. Any person violating any of the provisions of this section shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor.

SB 627 also adds Chapter 17.45 (commencing with Section 7289) Division 7 of Title 1 of the Government Code to require any law enforcement agency operating in California to, by July 1, 2026, maintain and publicly post a written policy limiting the use of facial coverings. The bill would exempt personnel of any agency from the crime of wearing a facial covering if an agency maintains a policy pursuant to this section no later than July 1, 2026.

Please read at squad conferences and give a copy to all personnel.