3-03/600.00 - Facial Coverings

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish Department rules governing the limited use of facial coverings by sworn Department members while performing official duties. This policy is intended to ensure compliance with applicable state and local law regulating peace officer identification and to affirm the Department's commitment to transparency, accountability, and public trust.

Definitions

Facial Covering**:** any opaque mask, garment, helmet, headgear, or other item that conceals or obscures a member's facial identity. Facial coverings include, but are not limited to, balaclavas, tactical masks, gaiters, ski masks, or any similar facial covering or face-shielding item.

Facial Coverings **do not include**: translucent face shields or clear masks that do not conceal the member's facial identity and are worn in compliance with Department policy and procedure; N95 medical or surgical masks worn for the purpose of preventing the transmission of disease or infection; air-purifying respirators, masks or self-contained breathing apparatuses that are necessary to protect against exposure to toxins, gas, smoke, inclement weather, hazardous or harmful environmental conditions, or for authorized underwater operations; Department-issued motorcycle helmets worn by members in the course of their duties as motor officers or when operating any vehicle that requires a helmet for safe operation; protective eyewear necessary to safeguard a member's eyes from the use of retinal weapons in the course of their duties.

Policy

Sworn members shall not wear facial coverings that conceal or obscure their facial identity when performing their duties, except as expressly authorized in this policy.

Authorized Exceptions

Facial coverings may be worn under the following limited circumstances:

- A Department member assigned to the Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB) in the performance of authorized SEB special weapons teams' duties, as provided in MPP 2-11/060.00 (Special Enforcement Bureau).
- A Department member conducting active undercover operations or assignments authorized by supervising personnel or court order.
- Tactical operations where Department-authorized protective equipment is required for a member's physical safety.
- As required based on applicable law governing occupational health and safety.
- As required based on applicable law governing reasonable accommodation.

- For protection of identity during prosecution.

Authorization

If opaque coverings are worn under exigent circumstances when no other reasonable alternative exists, a supervisor with a permanent rank of Sergeant or above shall be notified as soon as it is safe and practicable, and the necessity for the use shall be documented (e.g., Watch Commanders log or Deputy Call Log).

Note: Generalized and unsubstantiated fear and apprehension about officer safety is not sufficient to justify the use of facial coverings.

A supervisor shall not knowingly allow a Department member under their supervision to violate the applicable state or local law or this policy.

REFERENCES

Senate Bill 627 (SB 627)

Senate Bill 805 (SB 805)

California Penal Code section 185.5

California Government Code section 7389

3-03/340.00 - Name Tags

3-03/070.95 - Deputy Sheriff Identification

3-03/340.01 - Name Tag Exceptions