



*Grand Lodge Ancient Free and Accepted
Masons of Nebraska*

RONALD D. STITES
GRAND MASTER

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December 17, 2020

To: All members of all subordinate Masonic Lodges in Nebraska

Supplemental Information to Grand Master Edict #6, November 30, 2020

Due to a number of lodges moving their 2021 Officer Installations to be in conjunction with their regular communication, and the question “Can an officer installation be performed in a degree other than Master Mason Degree?”, I hereby authorize lodges to open in any degree for the purpose of installing 2021 Lodge Officers. The “Instructions & Exceptions for Subordinate Lodge Officer Installations to the 2011 Grand Lodge Ceremonies Manual” contained in Edict #6 will remain in effect and followed.

This alteration to the “Grand Lodge Ceremonies Manual” has been coordinated with and approved by the Grand Lodge Committee on Nebraska Work.

Fraternally,

Ronald D. Stites
Grand Master



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To: All members of all subordinate Masonic Lodges in Nebraska

**** GRAND MASTER'S EDICT No. 6 ****

Acting under my authority as Grand Master of Masons in Nebraska, I hereby decree that all 2021 subordinate lodge officer installations will be closed to the public. Only Masons will be allowed to attend the installation ceremony.

Further, the following “Instructions & Exceptions for Subordinate Lodge Officer Installations to the 2011 Grand Lodge Ceremonies Manual” will be followed. Pre- and/or post installation meals, snacks, refreshments, and social time are discouraged, and left to the discretion of the Worshipful Master.

Further, the Phase II Guidance, Directives, Ritual Exceptions of Edict No. 5 will remain in effect.

This Edict will expire upon the installation of the Deputy Grand Master on February 6, 2021.

Sincerely and fraternally yours,

Ronald D. Stites
Grand Master



Instructions & Exceptions for Subordinate Lodge Officer Installations to the 2011 “Grand Lodge Ceremonies Manual”

For health and safety reasons, as well as state and local restrictions, these instructions and exceptions are to be implemented for the 2021 subordinate lodge officer installations. Masks will be worn by all in the lodge. Six feet of distance should be maintained in seating arrangements as much as possible. The following exceptions are to be followed to comply with social distancing rules:

- Lodge will be opened in the Master Mason Degree prior to the Installation Ceremony with the appropriate declaration.
- The outgoing Master will make comments, introduce the installing officers and retire to the sideline.
- Upon introduction, the Installing Master, Chaplain, Marshal, and Secretary will proceed to their normal locations in the East, and at the Secretary’s Table.
- The jewels of office will be worn by the officers to be installed for their new office, and the rods, sword, and baton will be pre-positioned at their respective places/stations.
- As the Installing Secretary announces the names of the officers elected and appointed, they will enter from the Preparation Room and march to their place or station and remain standing. The Master-elect, however, will march to a location just West of and centered on the Altar facing East and remain standing there as the rest of the officers are introduced.
- To reduce congestion in the East, the Treasurer, Chaplain, Secretary, and Marshal should march to and sit near the East on the sidelines.
- The Installing Marshal will conduct all officers without touching them. He will ask them to accompany him at his right side, or following him in the case of the Deacons and Stewards.
- When directed, the Installing Marshal will conduct the Master-elect to the Altar.
- The Installing Marshal will conduct the Installing Chaplain to and from the Altar without touching him. After the prayer, the Marshal will escort the Installing Chaplain to the South sideline, leaving the Chaplain’s chair open for the to-be installed Chaplain.
- The Installing Marshal will conduct the Master-elect to the East. The Installing Master will adopt his language to indicate that he has been invested with the jewel of his office.
- The Installing Marshal will display the furniture and implements of the lodge, but will not hand them to the Master-elect.
- The Installing Master will help the Master-elect to ascend the steps to the East, will hand him the gavel, and place the hat on his head. **Then both will use hand sanitizer.**
- The remaining officers to be installed will be raised by two raps and will remain where they are to receive their charge, then will be seated with one rap.
- The Installing Marshal will conduct the remaining officers by going to their chair, conducting them to the East, and back to their chair. He will not invest them with jewels or hand them rods, sword, or baton. The Installing Master may elect to assist the Marshal by naming the next officer to be installed and instructing him to conduct him/them to the East. As the newly elected Secretary is being conducted to the East, the Installing Secretary will exit the Secretary’s Table and move to the South sideline allowing the newly elected Secretary to take his seat at the Secretary’s Table.
- The Marshal makes the Proclamation and takes a seat on the sidelines.
- The Master makes his remarks.
- A ritual closing will be performed.
- The newly installed officers will not march out.



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August 1, 2020

To: All members of all subordinate Masonic Lodges in Nebraska

**** GRAND MASTER'S EDICT No. 5 ****

Acting under my authority as Grand Master of Masons in Nebraska, I hereby decree that Phase II of the resumption of lodge functions and activities will begin in Nebraska effective August 1, 2020. Compliance with the below Phase II Guidance, Directives, Ritual Exceptions are mandatory. This Edict will remain in effect until further notice.

Sincerely and fraternally yours,
Ronald D. Stites
Grand Master



Phase II: Nebraska Lodge Guidance, Directives, & Ritual Exceptions Effective August 1, 2020

The following **Guidance, Directives, and Ritual Exceptions** have been developed for Phase II allowing Nebraska lodges to resume degree/ritual work during the Coronavirus Pandemic. The **Guidance, Directives, and Ritual Exceptions** will be updated when deemed appropriate.

Remain vigilant and monitor national, state, and local announcements of changes to restrictions and recommendations. While the Guidance, Directives, and Ritual Exceptions being provided covers a wide range of topics, it is impossible to address every situation lodges will face. When there is an absence of direction for unique circumstances, it is recommended that lodges refer to local restrictions, plan accordingly, and let common sense prevail.

Guidance

- Community spread of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) is occurring which poses a risk to the health and welfare of all. Therefore, members voluntarily assume all risks related to exposure to COVID-19 by attending Blue Lodge meetings/activities.
- **If a lodge feels uncomfortable about having a meeting, or activity, or degree conferral, then do not do it. No penalty will be imposed for the decision.**
- **Individual attendance is voluntary for lodge meetings, activities, and degree conferrals and decisions to attend/participate are personal.**
- If a brother has symptoms of COVID-19, or has family members with COVID-19, or has knowingly been exposed to COVID-19 he should remain at home.

- Perform a risk assessment of the lodge building. Pay specific attention to areas of high traffic, frequently touched surfaces, and meeting rooms where efforts are needed to maximize sanitation and allow appropriate social distancing.
- This Guidance and subsequent Direction are the minimum. Worshipful Masters are allowed to establish stricter restrictions if they wish.

Directives

Lodge Preparation

- Develop a plan for cleaning and disinfection. Note, if the space is vacant for 7 days or longer, routine cleaning methods will suffice in most situations.
- Officers will familiarize themselves and comply with local and state restrictions regarding size of gatherings, safe distancing, and use of masks and gloves prior to notifying members of meetings and/or conferring degrees.
- Have hand sanitizer available at the entrance of the lodge and in the lodge room. Verify soap and water is available in all restrooms and wash areas.

Lodge Meetings

- Meetings may be opened in any degree. For collecting the pass comply with the below Ritual Exceptions.
- Brethren are to wear masks in the lodge building. Once the lodge is opened, and there is a minimum of 6 feet between attendees, the Worshipful Master will announce if masks will be worn or removed. If a brother chooses to keep his mask on, he may do so.
- Upon arrival, brethren are to wash their hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid shaking hands.
- The general use of gloves is optional. If gloves are worn they should not be cloth.
- Pre- and/or post-meeting meals, snacks, refreshments, and social time are discouraged and left to the discretion of the Worshipful Master.
- Maintain social distancing before, during, and after each meeting.
- Email all communications, minutes, agendas, and reports to brethren prior to the meeting. Post a copy outside of the lodge room. Do not provide individual copies for brethren.
- Balloting should be done with paper ballots. The appointed tellers should either wear disposable gloves or use hand sanitizer while distributing ballots and after counting ballots.
- The Secretary will maintain an accurate record of attendees for potential contact tracking.

Lodge Activities

- Investigating committees are authorized provided the committee members and petitioner are comfortable with the meeting.
- Mentoring and proficiency for individuals and round tables are authorized. If social distancing cannot be maintained, masks are strongly encouraged.
- Degree Conferral: Refer to and comply with the below Ritual Exceptions.
- Lodge social functions and fundraising activities are authorized. If food is served as part of a social function or fundraiser, conduct the event using the same restrictions as restaurants. Comply with local and state restrictions and at a minimum masks and gloves are to be worn during all food preparation, ordering, packaging, and delivery.

Ritual Exceptions for Degrees during COVID-19 Social Distancing

Note: *For health and safety reasons these exceptions apply for lodge degree practices, proving lodge proficiency, and actual degree conferral.*

Opening: The Deacons will wear masks when purging and collecting the pass.

Collecting the pass:

- Deacons will stay somewhat apart from each other when using centerline.
- Deacons do not step up on pedestals and give grip. They softly say the pass word.
- Deacons stop in front of brethren. The grip is not used. The brethren softly say the word without going mouth to ear.
- SD gives the word to the WM from the floor. WM rises to take it, communicates to SW, then sits.

(EA °) The Worshipful Master or Secretary should inform the candidate in advance that he should wear a shirt/coat with long sleeves. The SD should also wear a shirt/coat with long sleeves for the degree. The SD and Committee will maintain some distancing when examining the candidate. The SD should explain to the candidate that some exceptions to normal degree procedures will be required to conform to CDC guidelines relative to social distancing. The candidate will be asked if he is willing to wear a mask and be conducted by the SD during the degree, with the SD also being masked. If he is unwilling to comply, the degree will not proceed.

(All °) The candidate will wear his civilian clothes while being conducted. He will wear a mask. The candidate will be asked if he wants the SD to wear gloves while conducting him. When gloves are worn, they cannot come in contact with other surfaces, to avoid contamination.

(All °) The Stewards will wear masks and use sanitizers prior to and after handling the candidate.

(EA °) The WM should place his hand above the candidate's head when he questions him on his faith. The WM will not take the candidate by the right hand to help him rise.

(All °) During circumambulation the Wardens and WM will not place their hands on the candidate, and the SD will softly communicate the pass without ascending any platforms. The Wardens will wear masks when speaking to the candidate at their stations.

(All °) To teach how to approach the East the SW will only verbally instruct the candidate and the SD will guide him by escorting him forward.

(All °) The WM will wear gloves and a mask when giving the obligation. He will not place hands on the candidate during the obligation, or when changing the positions of the hands, but the SD will do it for him. When the WM asks the candidate what he desires he may touch his head, provided he is wearing fresh/sanitized gloves. The SD will assist the candidate in following the WM's instructions. The SD may leave his rod in the holder when the candidate is at the altar, to free his hands to perform these assisting actions.

(All °) The WM will not touch the candidate when teaching the grips and words. The SD will move to the right side of the candidate (in all three degrees) and take his hand to explain the grip.

(All °) Social distancing should be considered when the lines between the altar and the East are formed.

(EA °) The WM will wear gloves and a mask when presenting the apron.

(All °) During the presentation of the working tools, the WM will not hand them to the candidate.

(All °) For the lecture, the chairs for the SD and candidate should have some separation.

(All °) The brother giving the Charge will wear a mask when presenting.

(All °) After closing the lodge, the WM should remind the brethren to practice social distancing when congratulating the candidate. (No handshakes, possibly use a hand-over-heart gesture.)

Additional items for FC degree

1. When presenting the working tools the WM should visually present them at the beginning and then set them on the pedestal until each use is explained. This eliminates constantly switching between tools with each explanation.
2. The SD (the Staircase lecturer) will wear a mask and should guide the candidate by placing his hand on his back/shoulder and suggesting the movement forward.
3. On the way to the Middle Chamber, the JW and SW may physically touch the SD to give the grip for the passes, and both they and the SD will sanitize their hands immediately afterwards.

Additional items for MM degrees (Second Section)

1. The WM should place his hand on the candidate's shoulder when saying "Go now.....".
2. The Ruffians will wear masks and will grasp the candidate's shirt/coat, but should stay at arm's length and not use mouth-to-ear for demanding information.
3. No more than 6 brethren should be on the canvas, and all should be wearing masks. They should socially distance themselves until just before needed, and immediately return to their seats after they have finished their duties. The march will go only one circle in the West before lowering the canvas.
4. The funeral procession should be the maximum that can be positioned in the lines in the West and still maintain social distancing.
5. KS and the GSW will wear a mask and gloves to accomplish their duties at the gravesite. The brethren in the lines will wear masks. KS should give the word only once, release the candidate's hand, and not physically repeat the 5 points when giving the explanation.
6. The Secretary will provide a sanitized pen for the candidate to sign the bylaws.