

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE

SPECIAL ORDER NO. 1

January 27, 2026

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS ON January 27, 2026

SUBJECT: FACIAL COVERINGS – ESTABLISHED

BACKGROUND: On September 20, 2025, Senate Bill (SB) 627 was signed into law, limiting the use of face coverings by on-duty law enforcement officers in the performance of their duties. California legislators declared that the routine use of facial coverings by law enforcement officers carries significant implications for public perception, community trust, and officer accountability. To address these issues, the Department has implemented policy designed to reinforce transparency and ensure the public's confidence in the integrity and professionalism of its officers.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Order is to establish a policy to bring the Department into compliance with the requirements set forth in SB 627, restricting the use of facial coverings while on-duty.

PROCEDURE:

- I. **FACIAL COVERINGS – ESTABLISHED.** Department Manual Section 3/603.50, *Facial Coverings*, has been established.

AUDIT RESPONSIBILITY: The Commanding Officer, Audit Division, shall review this directive and determine whether an audit or inspection shall be conducted in accordance with Department Manual Section 0/080.30.



JIM McDONNELL
Chief of Police

Attachment

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DEPARTMENT MANUAL
VOLUME III
Established by Special Order No. 1, 2026

603.50 FACIAL COVERINGS. *The use of facial coverings by sworn personnel shall be strictly limited to specific, clearly defined, and exceptional circumstances. Facial coverings are not to be employed in a manner that undermines public confidence or obscures officer identity without compelling justification. Generalized or undifferentiated fear or apprehension regarding officer safety will not constitute sufficient grounds for using facial coverings.*

Facial coverings are defined as any opaque mask, garment, helmet, headgear, or other item that conceals or obscures the facial identity of an individual, including, but not limited to:

- *Balaclavas;*
- *Tactical masks;*
- *Neck gaiters;*
- *Ski masks; and,*
- *Any similar type of facial covering or face-shielding item.*

*Under Penal Code Section 185.5(b)(2), the following items are **not** considered facial coverings:*

- *Translucent face or clear protective face shields that do 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;*
- *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,*
 - *Self-contained breathing apparatus (such as a gas mask, ballistic, or explosive face protection) necessary to protect against exposure to any toxin, gas, smoke, inclement weather, or any other hazardous or harmful environmental condition.*
- *A mask, helmet, or device, including, but not limited to, a self-contained breathing apparatus necessary for underwater use;*
- *Motorcycle helmets 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; and,*
- *Eyewear necessary to protect from the use of retinal weapons, including, but not limited to lasers.*

California Senate Bill 627 took effect on January 1, 2026, and prohibits California law enforcement officers, as defined in Section 830 of the California Penal Code, from wearing facial coverings that conceal their identity while on duty and in the performance of their duties, except as specified below.

Facial Covering Use by Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT). *Sworn personnel assigned to SWAT team units may wear facial coverings while actively performing their SWAT responsibilities.*

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Facial Covering Use in Authorized Undercover Assignments and Tactical Operations.

Officers working an undercover assignment, tactical operation, or environmental response, in which their identification as a law enforcement officer would hinder their investigation or safety, are permitted to wear facial coverings. Facial coverings shall only be permitted when no other reasonable alternative exists and is authorized by court order or a Department supervisor with specific cause for use of facial coverings during specified operations. The reason for the exemption shall be documented in the authorizing supervisor's daily log.

Facial Covering Use for Protection During Prosecution. *Sworn personnel involved in active or concluded undercover operations may continue to have their identity protected (potentially through the use of a mask or other means) during legal proceedings, such as a criminal trial, where revealing their identity could compromise future work or safety.*

Supervisor Responsibilities. *It is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that sworn employees under their immediate supervision comply with these standards. Failure to comply with the Department's sworn personal appearance standards may be considered misconduct, and supervisors shall ensure that appropriate corrective action is taken.*

Commanding Officer Responsibilities. *Primary responsibility for complying with the Department's facial coverings policy rests with each sworn Department employee. However, each commanding officer is also responsible for ensuring that sworn employees within their command comply with this policy. Noncompliance with the Department's facial coverings policy may be considered misconduct, and commanding officers shall ensure that appropriate corrective action is taken.*