



Governor Northam announces COVID-19 vaccine requirement for state workers

Editor's note: Virginia Tech employees are still required to submit their vaccination information by Aug. 15. Employees should register in the COVID-19 Vaccination Status Self-Reporting form at <https://apps.es.vt.edu/vaccinereporting> after receiving their final dose.

From: University Relations

Governor Ralph Northam today announced that Virginia will require its state workers to show proof that they are fully vaccinated or be tested for COVID-19 every week. This policy will impact approximately 122,000 employees and will go into effect on Sept. 1. Virginia Tech employees are required to submit their information by Aug. 15.

Governor Northam's action comes as the highly transmissible delta variant is driving up cases across the Commonwealth and around the country, primarily among unvaccinated people. Nearly 73 percent of Virginia adults have had their first shot, and 54 percent of all Virginians are fully vaccinated against the virus, which is higher than most states.

"The only way to end this pandemic is to for everyone to get vaccinated against COVID-19," said Governor Northam. "As head of state government, we have a responsibility to lead by example and ensure the safety of our employees and the people they serve. The three vaccines are safe, effective, free, and widely available, and I strongly urge every eligible Virginian to get their shot. The time for waiting is over."

The full text of Executive Directive Eighteen can be found at <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/executive-actions/ED-18-Ensuring-a-Safe-Work-Place.pdf>.

Virginians who have not been vaccinated are encouraged to go to vaccinate.virginia.gov or call 877-VAX-IN-VA (877-829-4682, TTY users call 7-1-1) to find a nearby vaccination clinic. For answers to frequently asked questions or to learn more about vaccination for COVID-19 in Virginia, visit vdh.virginia.gov/covid-19-vaccine.

University issues updated mask requirements for indoor spaces

Editor's note (8/11/21): The story has been updated to provide greater clarity and definition of indoor public spaces. In addition, information has been added regarding Blacksburg Transit and to clarify that unvaccinated individuals are required to wear a mask when in all indoor spaces, other than a private work spaces or one's own residence hall room.

In its ongoing effort to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, the growing challenge of the delta variant, and a corresponding rise in cases in communities across the country, and to align with the recently updated guidance (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Virginia Tech will require the proper use of masks by all individuals, regardless of vaccination status, when indoors in designated public areas.

As a part of this mandate, the university has instituted an interim requirement for face coverings in instructional spaces at the start of the fall semester. Both instructors and students, regardless of vaccination status, will be required to wear face coverings in all classrooms and laboratories when classes begin Aug. 23. Virginia Tech will reevaluate this interim requirement later in September after a thorough review of both campus and regional data related to the overall status of public health.

In the case of instructional settings that differ from customary classroom and laboratory configurations, department heads should contact the Office of Emergency Management to determine if any adjustments to the mask wearing requirement may be appropriate.

In addition, all faculty, staff, students, and visitors at all Virginia Tech-owned or leased facilities located in communities with substantial or high community transmission (<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>) will be required to wear a mask in indoor public spaces starting Aug. 10. Indoor public spaces include all lobbies, foyers, atriums, hallways, and elevators in university-owned or leased facilities accessible by the general public; academic spaces used by students for classrooms or teaching laboratories not typically open for access by the general public; and auditorium, arena, theatre, museum, concert hall, or other areas used for a performance or an exhibit of the arts or sciences; and any public meeting room.

In addition, all Blacksburg Transit (BT) riders must wear a mask while on the bus at all times.

Indoor public spaces do not include private work places, meaning any office, work area or employment meeting space that is not open to the public in the normal course of business.

Individuals who are not vaccinated are required to wear a mask in all indoor spaces other than a private office or one's own residence hall room.

Wearing of masks is encouraged but not required in on-campus residence halls because of the lower risk of transmission among a largely vaccinated student community. Wearing of masks is required in public settings such as dining facilities, when individuals are not eating or drinking.

Masks are not required in outdoor settings at this time.

"Virginia Tech has achieved a high level of vaccine adoption, and we expect that progress to strengthen in the days ahead," said Mike Mulhare, assistant vice president for emergency management. "At the same time, it would irresponsible to ignore the latest data, science, and public health guidance about the delta variant and the increasing risk it poses to the community around us. By requiring face coverings in public indoor spaces, we add an additional layer of protection to help us deliver a consistently full and safe experience as we start the fall."

As of today, 88 percent of all students and 73 percent of all employees have verified they are fully vaccinated for COVID-19. Students have until Friday to submit their vaccine information and employees have until Aug. 15 to submit their vaccine information.

Virginia Tech will permit unit supervisors and their teams to determine mask requirements based on unique work-related circumstances. In such cases, team members should discuss specific circumstances under the guidance of their supervisor or unit head. The Division of Human Resources and a college or unit human resources professional may also provide additional assistance.

Students with questions may contact the Dean of Students Office (540-231-3787) for assistance.

Any university faculty, staff, or student located in Blacksburg, Roanoke, or the greater Washington, D.C., metro area who is not fully vaccinated is required to participate in a surveillance testing program that will include mandatory testing at an initial frequency of at least once a week.

Frequently asked questions regarding these new requirements may be found on the Ready website at <https://ready.vt.edu/>.

Reminder to employees: Plan now to use your annual leave

As a reminder, the last day to use your accrued 2021 leave is Jan. 9, 2022.

While you may not have taken leave you normally would have taken this year, it's important to take time away from work for your mental health and wellness.

Remember that you'll need to cover Dec. 27–30, 2021, with appropriate leave types during the university's Winter Closing. For example, a full-time employee working eight hours Monday through Friday will need 32 hours of leave for these four days. The most common types of leave used for this period are annual, family personal, and compensatory (holiday comp, overtime comp). Sick leave is not appropriate to use for these days unless you have a documented illness or doctor's appointment during that time. (See below for additional information on upcoming Virginia Tech holiday breaks.)

We encourage you to work with your managers or supervisors now to plan ahead and ensure you can use your leave and reduce your annual leave balance by Jan. 9, 2022.

More information about leave carryover limits for different positions is available on the HR Leave website at <https://www.hr.vt.edu/benefits/leave.html>. For more information on Virginia Tech holidays please refer to University Policy No. 4315: Guidelines on Holidays at <https://policies.vt.edu/assets/4315.pdf>.

Questions about leave and leave usage? Please contact your college or department's HR representative or contact the HR Leave Team at hrlleave@vt.edu.

Upcoming holiday closings:

- Labor Day: University is closed on Monday, Sept. 6.
- Thanksgiving break: University is closed from noon on Wednesday, Nov. 24, through Friday, Nov. 26, and reopens on Monday, Nov. 29.
- Winter break: University is closed from Thursday, Dec. 23, through Friday, Dec. 31, 2021, and reopens on Monday, Jan. 3, 2022.

A full list of university holidays is available at <https://www.hr.vt.edu/benefits/leave/holiday-closing-schedule.html>.

Designated holidays: The following days are designated holidays for eligible faculty and staff. You do not need to use annual leave on these days.

- Thanksgiving break: Wednesday, Nov. 24, starting at noon, through Friday, Nov. 26.
- Winter break: Thursday, Dec. 23; Friday, Dec. 24; and Friday, Dec. 31.