

Dear Knightdale Community:

On November 25, 2020 at 5 PM, Executive Order No. 180 will go into effect and expand the State's efforts to combat the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The most significant elements of the order include an expansion of the mask wear mandate and the ability of law enforcement officers to take action against non-compliance. The Knightdale Police Department recognizes there are many questions and concerns surrounding the new provisions. As such, we would like to take the opportunity to again educate our stakeholders on our role in enforcement. It is a message we have shared previously, but one worth restating. Detailed information regarding Executive Order No. 180, as well as up-to-date information on COVID-19, can be found through the NC Department of Health and Human Services (ncdhhs.gov) and Wake County (wakegov.com).

As part of the executive branch of local government, the Knightdale Police Department is specifically charged with enforcing the provisions outlined in Executive Order No. 180. It is important for our community to know that we are sensitive to the implications of these new restrictions. We recognize they have the potential to add immense stress to those already fatigued by this lingering pandemic, and we understand the strain it places on an already tense holiday season. As your Police Chief, you have my word that our department intends to do everything reasonably possible not to compound that stress. We cannot summarily ignore our obligation to enforce such orders, but rest assured that our approach to enforcement will remain fair, balanced, and commensurate with the values that have always guided us. Over the last several months, this stance has allowed us to promote the health and welfare of our community while demonstrating empathy, dignity, and respect for the businesses and individuals affected.

In the spirit of cooperation, we are calling on everyone to voluntarily comply with the new provisions outlined in Executive Order No. 180. As we have stated before, a united approach to compliance is all the enforcement a good community will ever need. To assist you, an FAQ document related to Executive Order No. 180 has been included with this correspondence. The new mandates for individuals differ from those intended for businesses, so please take a few minutes to review the content.

We recognize that violations may occur. When they do, we will continue to employ a strategy of "Educate-Warn-Enforce" to resolve the matter. Moreover, our agency will not intrude upon private gatherings to conduct head counts, nor will we stop and detain citizens for the sole purpose of determining why they aren't wearing a mask. Such actions are inconsistent with our values and the Constitutional ideals we swore to uphold and protect. Instead, we will work with our community stakeholders to help them understand the importance of compliance. An inescapable human truth is a person's desire to know "why." When we seize the opportunity to explain and educate, this basic human need is satisfied, and extraordinary levels of cooperation can be achieved. Violations reported through formal channels will be investigated and addressed on a case by case basis. We will review the facts in a light most favorable to those involved and seek to find a mutually beneficial solution for everyone. It is our intent to utilize punitive enforcement only as a last resort. Whatever the case, enforcement will be Constitutional and exercised in a manner that preserves the legitimacy of the police.

On behalf of our elected officials, I again extend our appreciation for your cooperation and support. Please know that the success of any law enforcement organization hinges on a relationship of trust and mutual respect with the community it serves. We are confident that our continued and collective support of one another will sustain us through the remainder of this pandemic. Please stay safe and know that we are here if you need us.

Sincerely,

Chief Lawrence Capps
Knightdale Police Department
