

# Businesses Enforcing Mask-Wearing Rules Encounter Security Issues

**By Oscar Villanueva**

**Managing Director of Security Services & Crisis Preparedness**

Face masks are becoming a requirement in many locations as the country reopens from the COVID-19 crisis following a long lockdown. Guidelines the CDC recently posted on their website, and local government requirements in many states are the norm but not easy to enforce.

There are some news reports of individuals arrested over their refusal to wear a mask in public places, like the 22-year-old woman in New York City refusing to wear a mask on the subway. Much more common are situations where mask-wearing enforcement is left to company employees, in most cases at retail stores. One prime example of this occurred at a Van Nuys, CA Target store on May 1, 2020. Two male shoppers were not wearing face masks as they entered the store. Store employees confronted the two to ask they put masks on, but they refused. The two shoppers were asked to leave the store and as they were being escorted towards the exit, one of the individuals

assaulted an employee. Police eventually arrested both men, who were later charged with suspicion of assault and battery (you can watch the video of the incident [here](#)). This incident is not isolated with similar attacks on employees in many parts of the country.

## **How can businesses and employees safely handle a situation like this?**

These are difficult situations and employees should, above all, do what is necessary to remain safe and secure when a customer or visitor needs to be approached regarding not wearing a mask. Here are some tips to consider when dealing with this problem:

- Communicate your concerns professionally (keep in mind it is not personal).
- Reference the safety needs of both parties- "Wearing a mask is a good idea to keep us both safe from infection."

- Work to understand their position and show empathy- "I understand wearing a mask is uncomfortable, it takes a while to get used to it."
- Ask for their help in resolving the issue- "We appreciate you shopping at our store. How can we resolve this issue so you can get what you need?"
- Seek assistance from a manager.
- Present alternatives to the issue- "They are hard to come by, but I happen to have an extra mask you can use today."

Hostility management and de-escalation techniques are key to successful outcomes during these incidents, and training in these disciplines is recommended for businesses dealing with customers on a routine basis.

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