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**ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTIVE – 112.050**  
**SPIT GUARDS**

**EFFECTIVE DATE: August 11, 2021**  
**AFFECTS: Sworn and Detention Personnel**

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**REVISION DATE: August 11, 2021**

**I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this directive is to establish policy and procedures governing the use of spit guards on prisoners who are exhibiting spitting behavior.

While small, the chance of a potential hazardous pathogen transmission through saliva is possible. It is therefore reasonable to protect officers and others from the transmission of disease when a suspect or prisoner attempts to spit on officers or others.

The use of spit guards may attract attention and comment from our community and as such, its use must always be proportionate, reasonable and justified.

**II. POLICY**

The policy of the Plano Police Department is to ensure the safety of its officers, citizens and suspects when required by circumstances to utilize spit guards. Careful considerations shall be made in regards to the circumstances, alternatives, and consequences for each situation and the use of spit guards limited to those where other options are not available or reasonable.

**III. DEFINITIONS**

- A. Officers - Sworn Plano police officers and detention officers.
- B. Spit Guard - The spit guard mask or spit guard hood that is temporarily used to prevent a suspect from projecting spittle onto another person.
- C. Spit Guard Hood (SG Hood) – A hood made completely of netting material (similar to bug nets used by hikers and beekeepers) with no cloth portions. (Plano utilizes the MTR spit sock made entirely of net material.) The hood may or may not have an elastic bottom band that keeps the hood on the head. The hood will prevent spittle from effectively leaving the hood. This hood does not have any cloth portions that restrict an officer's visual monitoring of the individual.
- D. Spit Guard Mask (SG Mask) - A mask made of netting material (used in the food service industry as a "Beard Net") that is placed over the suspect's mouth and chin and secured over the ears or behind the head depending on the model. The net is positioned under the nose, but over the mouth and chin. The net will prevent spittle from effectively leaving the mask.

**IV. PROCEDURES**

- A. Training Required
  - 1. Officers will not utilize spit guards without first receiving training in the use of spit guards by the department. Spit guard training is available online on Power DMS.
- B. Considerations Prior to Use of Spit Guards
  - 1. Numerous studies of the pneumatic impedance of spit masks and spit hoods have clearly indicated they do not impede breathing. However, medical professionals have indicated the use of a spit hood device, while not restricting breathing, can have negative physiological effects on some individuals with mental issues that may cause increased panic, increased heart rate and possible increased resistance. For these reasons, the Plano Police Department provides officers with two options for use in preventing the potential transfer of communicable diseases through spitting. Because officers are not always able to immediately discern which individuals have mental issues, officers should attempt to use the SG mask first to prevent spitting and progress to the SG hood only if the use of SG mask is unsuccessful or is removed by the prisoner.

Both SG mask and SG hoods (MTR) allow some small particles to blow through but prevent large discharge. If officers have information the person does have a communicable disease,

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officers may consider the placing of either a standard surgical mask or an N-95 mask on the prisoner. Officers should also consider using personal PPE in these situations.

**C. Application and Use of a Spit Guard**

1. Spit guards may be placed upon persons in custody when the officer reasonably believes the person will spit on the officer or others or is exhibiting spitting behavior.
2. Spit guard hoods shall not be used on youth believed to be under the age of 17.
3. The spit guard should only be used after the individual is physically restrained preventing removal by the prisoner.
4. When practical, officers should wear protective gloves.
5. Officers will explain to the suspect why the spit guard is being used.
6. Spit guards may never be used as a form of punishment.
7. Persons sprayed with OC spray will be thoroughly decontaminated including hair, head and clothing before application of a spit guard. OC spray shall not be used on an individual wearing a spit guard.
8. Spit guards shall not be used on individuals who are bleeding profusely about the mouth or nose (until properly treated).
9. Spit guards shall not be used on persons who clearly have difficulty breathing or actively vomiting.
10. A spit guard hood should never be placed over a spit guard mask.
11. Officers are prohibited from using anything other than a department approved spit guard or a surgical or N-95 mask to prevent spitting.

**D. Requirements after Application of a Spit Guard**

1. The officer utilizing the spit guard shall ensure the spit guard is properly positioned and secured so that it allows adequate ventilation and the restrained person can breathe normally.
2. Officers will provide assistance during movement due to potential impaired or distorted vision.
3. Officers will conduct continuous monitoring of the individual during custody and transport for indications of difficulty breathing and take immediate action to provide and obtain medical care if difficulty breathing is observed. The individual is never to be left alone and unmonitored when wearing a spit guard. Officers will document their monitoring efforts in their custody report.
4. If an individual vomits or the spit guard becomes significantly contaminated, the spit guard shall be immediately removed and the airway cleared.
5. Spit guards may remain in place as long as the officer believes the subject remains a spitting hazard. Reassessment of the continued use of the spit guard should be an ongoing process based on risk/threat assessment.

**E. Removal of the Spit Guard**

1. Officers should use protective gloves when removing a spit guard.
2. The spit guard should be disposed of immediately unless needed as evidence. Spit guards are single use devices.

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**F. Reporting Requirements**

1. The use of a spit guard is considered a use of force and must be reported in accordance with administrative directive 112.008 – Response to Resistance. Officers will describe their justification and use of spit guard in addition to any other use of force reported.

**G. Exposure Reporting**

1. Officers who have contact with a prisoner's spittle through the mouth, nose, eyes or open wound, shall complete the necessary reporting in accordance with administrative directive 112.009 – Infectious and Communicable Diseases.