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CDC lifts requirement that masks be worn on school buses and vans

BH

Bet

AssistantSuperintendents-owner@list1.doe.mass.edu on behalf of <As

Sun 2/27/2022 9:03 AM

To: Bettencourt, Helene H. (DESE) <helene.h.bettencourt@mass.gov>

Dear Superintendents, Assistance Superintendents, Charter School Leaders, Collaborative Directors and Leaders of Approved Private Special Education Schools,

Commissioner Riley asked me to share this information with you on his behalf.

Late Friday, the CDC announced that, effective February 25, 2022, it is no longer requiring that masks be worn on school buses or vans for K-12 students and children in childcare programs. Schools and districts may decide whether to lift or maintain local mask requirements on buses or vans.

As always, any individual who wishes to continue to mask should be supported in that choice.

More information on the updated CDC guidance is available here: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/face-masks-public-transportation.html.

Please contact the Rapid Response line at 781.338.3500 with any questions or concerns.

Best,
Helene

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

COVID-19

Requirement for Face Masks on Public Transportation Conveyances and at Transportation Hubs

Updated Feb. 25, 2022

Summary of Recent Changes

Updates as of February 25, 2022

Effective February 25, 2022, CDC does not require wearing of masks on buses or vans operated by public or private school systems, including early care and education/child care programs.

Traveling on public transportation increases a person's risk of getting and spreading COVID-19 by bringing people in close contact with others, often for prolonged periods, and exposing them to frequently touched surfaces. Air travel often requires spending time in security lines and busy airport terminals. Travel by bus, train, and other conveyances used for international, interstate, or intrastate transportation poses similar challenges. Staying 6 feet away from others is often difficult on public transportation conveyances. People may not be able to distance themselves by the recommended minimum of 6 feet from other people seated nearby or from those standing in or passing through the aisles on airplanes, trains, or buses.

Travel contributes to interstate and international spread of COVID-19. Wearing masks that completely cover the mouth and nose reduces the spread of COVID-19. People who never develop symptoms (asymptomatic) or are not yet showing symptoms (pre-symptomatic) might not know that they are infected but can still spread COVID-19 to others. Masks also offer protection to the wearer.

On January 29, 2021, CDC issued an Order that required face masks to be worn by all people while on public transportation (which included all passengers and all personnel operating conveyances) traveling into, within, or out of the United States and U.S. territories. The Order also required all people to wear masks while at transportation hubs (e.g., airports, bus or ferry terminals, train and subway stations, seaports, U.S. ports of entry, and other locations where people board public transportation in the United States and U.S. territories), including both indoor and outdoor areas.

Effective February 25, 2022, CDC is exercising its enforcement discretion to not require that people wear masks on buses or vans operated by public or private school systems, including early care and education/child care programs. CDC is making this change to align with updated guidance that no longer recommends

Posters

universal indoor mask wearing in K-12 schools and early education settings in areas with a low or medium COVID-19 Community Level. School systems at their discretion may choose to require that people wear masks on buses or vans.

CDC previously announced that it would use enforcement discretion to not require people to wear a mask in outdoor areas of conveyances (if such outdoor areas exist on the conveyance) or while outdoors at transportation hubs. CDC will continue to evaluate the requirements of its Order and determine whether additional changes may be warranted.

While in indoor areas of conveyances or while indoors at transportation hubs, people are not required to wear a mask under the following circumstances:

- while eating, drinking, or taking medication for brief periods of time;
- while communicating for brief periods of time with a person who is hearing impaired when the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication;
- if, on an aircraft, wearing oxygen masks is needed because of loss of cabin pressure or other event affecting aircraft ventilation;
- if unconscious (for reasons other than sleeping), incapacitated, unable to be awakened, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance;
- when necessary to temporarily lower or remove the mask to verify one's identity such as during Transportation Security Administration (TSA) screening or when asked to do so by the ticket or gate agent or any law enforcement official;
- when experiencing difficulty breathing or shortness of breath or feeling winded, until able to resume normal breathing with the mask; when vomiting until vomiting ceases; or if wearing a mask interferes with necessary medical care such as supplemental oxygen administered via an oxygen mask.

The following categories of people continue to be exempt from the requirement to wear a mask:

- A child under the age of 2 years;
- A person with a disability who cannot wear a mask, or cannot safely wear a mask, because of the disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. 12101 *et seq.*);
- A person for whom wearing a mask would create a risk to workplace health, safety, or job duty as determined by the relevant workplace safety guidelines or federal regulations.

People on board the following categories of conveyances continue to be exempt from the requirement to wear a mask:

- Private conveyances operated only for personal, non-commercial use;
- Commercial motor vehicles or trucks, if the driver is the only person in the vehicle or truck, or the vehicle or truck is operated by a team who all live in the same household and are the only persons in the vehicle;*
- Conveyances operated or chartered by the U.S. military as long as the operator of the conveyance follows all requirements of U.S. military services to prevent spread of COVID-19 that are equivalent to the requirements in CDC's Order.

*Non-passenger-carrying commercial vessels operated by a team of mariners who all live on the vessel and are the only people on the vessel are also permitted to use this exemption.

Mask Required on Public Transit

Poster with Photos:

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Frequently Asked Questions

General

What is a public transportation conveyance?
A public transportation conveyance is any mode of transportation other than a private vehicle. Types of public transportation conveyances include airplanes, trains, subways, buses, taxis, ride-shares, maritime transportation, trolleys, and cable cars.

Which public transportation conveyances does the order apply to, and in which areas?
The Order applies to all public transportation conveyances traveling into the United States (i.e., arriving from a foreign country) or within the United States (including within states or territories or traveling between states or territories). The Order also applies to all conveyances leaving the United States until they arrive at a foreign destination.

If a conveyance has outdoor areas (such as on a ferry or an open-air trolley or bus), wearing a mask is not required while outdoors unless otherwise required by the operator, federal, state, tribal, territorial, or local government.

How is CDC defining "outdoor" areas on conveyances and at transportation hubs?
Subject to how other federal partners and state and local entities define "outdoors," CDC understands "outdoors" to refer to any open-air area. Examples of outdoor areas of conveyances are the uncovered top decks of buses and open deck areas of ferries or other vessels. Examples of outdoor areas of transportation hubs include surface parking lots and partially enclosed parking garages, passenger pick-up/drop-off areas, railway platforms, piers, open hangars, and airport runways.

Are masks required on school buses?
No, CDC does not require people to wear masks on buses or vans operated by public or private school systems, including early care and education/child care programs. School systems at their discretion may choose to require that people wear masks on buses or vans.

What kind of mask should I wear?
People must wear masks that completely cover the mouth and nose. Masks should fit snugly against the sides of the face. See attributes of masks needed to fulfill the requirements of the Order. For more information about masks, see Types of Masks and Respirators.

Can I wear a face shield instead of a mask?
Face shields do not fulfill the requirements of the Order. Face shields may be worn in addition to a mask that fulfills the requirements of the Order, but face shields may **not** be worn **instead of** a mask. A face shield is effective at protecting the person wearing it from splashes to the face, particularly the eyes, but face shields do **not** protect others from respiratory droplets exhaled by the wearer. A face shield worn without a mask also does not protect the person wearing it from inhaling respiratory droplets.

What is a transportation hub?
A transportation hub is any location, indoors or outdoors, where people await, board, or disembark public transportation conveyances. These include but are not limited to commercial airports, general aviation airport buildings with commercial flights, bus terminals, all commercial vessel terminals, train and subway stations, seaports, U.S. ports of entry, and dedicated ride-share pick-up locations.

Which transportation hubs does the Order apply to, and in which areas?
The Order applies to all indoor areas of all transportation hubs in the United States and U.S. territories, except those operated by the U.S. military. Unless otherwise required by the operator, federal, state, tribal, territorial, or local government, people are not required to wear a mask when located in outdoor areas of a transportation hub.

Who is an operator of a public transportation conveyance?
A public transportation conveyance operator is any individual (e.g., crew, driver) or organization (e.g., transportation company) causing or authorizing the operation of a conveyance. The term "personnel operating conveyances" is used in these FAQs to refer specifically to individuals (e.g., crew members, drivers, conductors) on a conveyance for the purpose of operating it.

What happens if I don't wear a mask in an indoor area on a public transportation conveyance?
On conveyances with no outdoor spaces, operators of public transportation conveyances must refuse to board anyone not wearing a mask that completely covers the mouth and nose. On conveyances with outdoor areas, operators must refuse to allow entry to indoor areas to anyone not wearing a mask. Operators must also require that everyone on board (or in an

indoor area of the conveyance, as applicable) wears a mask for the entire duration of travel, subject to the exclusions and exemptions in CDC's Order. If a passenger refuses to comply, the operator must disembark the person at the earliest safe opportunity (or relocate the passenger to an outdoor area of the conveyance, if feasible). People who refuse to wear a mask may be subject to a civil penalty.

What if I need to take my mask off while indoors during travel or in a transportation hub?
There are some circumstances when taking your mask off would be necessary, including brief periods of time while eating, drinking, or taking medication. Other reasons include medical emergencies, to verify identity during security screenings, or if asked to do so by ticket/gate agents or law enforcement. On a plane, masks should be removed if oxygen masks are needed because of loss of cabin pressure or other event affecting aircraft ventilation.

Do personnel operating passenger-carrying conveyances need to wear a mask at all times while on the conveyance?
Personnel operating passenger-carrying conveyances (e.g., crew members, drivers, conductors) covered by the Order, must wear a mask while indoors on the conveyance, unless the person operating the conveyance is the only person on the conveyance, or the conveyance is operated by a team who all live in the same household and are the only people on the conveyance.

If the conveyance has outdoor areas, wearing a mask is not required outdoors. Operators of conveyances (i.e., employers), at their discretion, may require personnel operating conveyances to wear masks in outdoor areas of the conveyance.

Personnel operating conveyances are also exempted from the mask requirement if wearing a mask would create a risk to workplace health, safety, or job duty as determined by the relevant workplace safety guidelines or federal regulations.

Do workers at transportation hubs need to wear masks at all times in a work area?
Workers, including federal employees, must wear a mask while indoors on the premises of a transportation hub unless they are the only person in the work area, such as might occur in private offices, private hangars at airports, or in railroad yards. If another person enters the work area, or the worker leaves the work area and enters another area where others may be located, the worker must wear a mask. If the nature of the work area is such that other workers are likely to be located there and are permitted to enter or leave unannounced, then a mask must be worn at all times.

CDC does not require that workers wear a mask in outdoor areas of a transportation hub. Operators of transportation hubs (i.e., employers), at their discretion, may require employees to wear masks in outdoor areas.

Employees are also exempted from the mask requirement if wearing a mask would create a risk to workplace health, safety, or job duty as determined by the relevant workplace safety guidelines or federal regulations.

Do I need to wear a mask if I have been vaccinated against COVID-19?
Yes, the Order requires all people to wear a mask, including those who are up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines, if they are located indoors on a conveyance or indoors at a transportation hub.

Do I need to wear a mask if I have had a COVID-19 vaccine?
Yes, the Order requires all people to wear a mask, including those who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, if they are located indoors on a conveyance or indoors at a transportation hub.

What if another person near me refuses to wear a mask?
If you are in an indoor area of a conveyance and a passenger near you refuses to wear a mask, alert someone working on the conveyance (e.g., crew member, driver, conductor) for assistance. If you are in an indoor area of a transportation hub, notify a staff member or security personnel.

Does CDC's Order allow removal of a mask while on the premises of a transportation hub for the purpose of smoking or using tobacco products in areas where tobacco use is otherwise allowed?
No. CDC's Order does not include an exception for tobacco use. Additional information about smoking and COVID-19 may be found on CDC's website.

Why is a mask requirement still needed?
Public transportation conveyances and transportation hubs are locations where large numbers of people may gather, and physical distancing can be difficult. Furthermore, many people need to take public transportation for their livelihoods. Personnel operating the conveyance and passengers (including young children) might be unvaccinated, and some on board might be at increased risk of severe illness (including some who might not be protected by vaccination because of weakened immune systems). Such people may not have the option to disembark or relocate to another area of the conveyance, such as

on an airplane during flight or a bus or train while it is in motion. Transportation hubs are also places where people depart to different geographic locations, both across the United States and around the world. Therefore, an exposure in a transportation hub can have consequences to many destination communities if people become infected after they travel.

CDC does not require people to wear a mask in outdoor areas of conveyances and transportation hubs because of the lower risk of transmission outdoors. However, in areas with a high COVID-19 Community Level, people might choose to wear a mask outdoors when in sustained close contact with other people, particularly if they or someone they live with has a weakened immune system or is at increased risk for severe disease.

Correct and consistent use of masks in indoor areas on public transportation conveyances and indoor areas of transportation hubs will protect travelers and workers, enable safe and responsible travel during the pandemic, and help to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Maritime

Does the mask order apply to all commercial maritime conveyance activity in the United States?
Yes, the mask order applies to all persons traveling on commercial maritime conveyances into, within, or out of the United States and to all persons at U.S. seaports, when located in indoor areas. The term commercial maritime conveyance means all forms of commercial maritime vessels, including but not limited to cargo ships, fishing vessels, research vessels, self-propelled barges, and all forms of passenger carrying vessels including ferries, river cruise ships, and those chartered for fishing trips, unless otherwise exempted.

For cruise ship operators opting into CDC's COVID-19 Program for Cruise Ships, CDC will continue to exercise enforcement discretion regarding the requirements of this Order, applicable to operators of, and crew and passengers on board, cruise ships. Cruise ships that have chosen not to participate remain subject to the requirements of the Order.

Which maritime vessels are exempted from CDC's mask order?
Only the following maritime conveyances are exempted:

- Private maritime conveyances operated solely for personal, non-commercial use (e.g., personal watercraft),
- When the operator is the sole occupant on board the maritime conveyance,
- Mobile offshore drilling units and platforms, to include floating and fixed Outer Continental Shelf facilities as defined in 33 CFR 140.10, and
- Certain maritime conveyances excluded from the definition of vessels under 42 CFR 70.1:
  - Fishing boats including those used for shell-fishing*;
  - Tugs which operate only locally in specific harbors and adjacent waters†;
  - Barges without means of self-propulsion;
  - Construction-equipment boats and dredges; and
  - Sand and gravel dredging and handling boats.* Fishing vessels, fish processing vessels, and fish tender vessels as defined under 46 U.S.C § 2101 do not fall under this exemption — including shell-fishing vessels. A "fishing boat" is an auxiliary craft as defined under 46 U.S.C § 4502(k) carried on board a fishing vessel.† Tugs which operate only locally in specific harbors and adjacent waters means tug vessels operating exclusively within a worksite and that have been issued a worksite exemption by the U.S. Coast Guard.

Please note that the operators of these maritime conveyances and other persons on board must observe CDC's mask order while in indoor areas at the seaport.

How is CDC defining the term seaport in the mask order?
The term *seaport* means any port of entry or any other place where persons await, board, or disembark all forms of maritime commercial conveyances (e.g., a marina or dock). Wearing a mask is required in all indoor areas of a seaport.

Are mariners on non-passenger commercial maritime conveyances exempt from wearing a mask under the exemption for "a person for whom wearing a mask would create a risk to workplace health, safety, or job duty as determined by the relevant workplace safety guidelines or federal regulations"?

No, this exemption does not exempt mariners from the mask order simply by virtue of working on a non-passenger related commercial maritime conveyance. To be exempt, the mariner would need to be performing a duty that would, if a mask were worn, create a risk to workplace health, safety, or job duty as determined by the relevant workplace safety guidelines or federal regulations. The exemption only applies while performing that duty.

Mariners on many non-passenger-related commercial maritime conveyances (e.g., cargo and towing ships) live on board for weeks with little contact outside the crew. How should the mask order be applied onboard these conveyances during a voyage?

If the vessel is operated by a team who all live on the vessel and are the only people on the vessel, mariners on commercial vessels are not required to wear masks and should be guided by CDC's Interim Guidance for Ships on Managing Suspected or Confirmed Cases of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Per the Interim Guidance, it is recommended that crew wear masks when outside of their single occupancy cabin unless work duties prevent their safe use or wearing a mask may interfere with use of personal protective equipment required due to worksite hazards. Mariners would not be expected to wear a mask while they are alone and are eating, sleeping, or resting. Masks are not required outdoors.

Additionally, mariners must wear masks in indoor areas when other people (e.g., visitors, pilots, inspectors) join the ship for any period of time and when mariners disembark the ship when located in indoor areas of a seaport.

Does the mask order apply to a personal watercraft that is occasionally used commercially?
While the Order does not apply to personal maritime conveyances, the mask order applies to all persons in indoor areas on board if a personal maritime conveyance is used for a commercial purpose, such as for a chartered fishing trip. Operators of such conveyances do not need to wear a mask if they are the only person on board.

Last Updated Feb. 25, 2022