



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CDC 24/7: Saving Lives, Protecting People™

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)



What Paratransit Operators Need to Know about COVID-19

Updated Oct. 21, 2020

[Print](#)

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness caused by a virus (SARS-COV-2).

COVID-19 can sometimes cause serious complications. [People at increased risk for severe illness](#) include:

- [Older adults.](#)
- People of any age who have [underlying medical conditions.](#)

More Info for Paratransit

[Employers](#)



How COVID-19 Spreads

COVID-19 is a new disease and we are still learning about it. Here's what we currently know:

- The virus that causes COVID-19 mainly [spreads](#) from person-to-person through respiratory droplets:
 - Between people who are in [close contact](#) with one another (within 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes or more).
 - Produced when a person who is infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 coughs, sneezes, or talks.
- You can get the virus from people who don't seem sick or don't have any [symptoms](#).
- You might be able to get COVID-19 by shaking someone's hand or touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching your face, mouth, nose, or eyes.

As a paratransit operator, you might be exposed to the virus at your job when

- In [close contact](#) (within 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes or more) with guests or passengers
 - Coming into close and often physical contact as passengers board or exit the vehicle and, in some cases, as you assist and secure passengers.
- Touching or handling frequently touched items (such as the farebox, cash, car keys, wheelchair lifts, wheelchair securements, steering wheel, handrails, or door handles) and then touching your face, mouth, nose, or eyes.

How You Can Protect Yourself and Others

Stay home if you are having [symptoms](#) of COVID-19.

- Follow [CDC recommended steps](#) if you are sick.
- Notify your employer if you test positive for COVID-19.
- Do not return to work until the criteria to [discontinue home isolation](#) are met.
 - Talk with your healthcare provider about when it's safe for you to return to work.
- Follow [CDC recommended precautions](#) and tell your supervisor if you or someone you live with or someone you have had recent [close contact](#) with has COVID-19.

Stay at least 6 feet away from passengers and coworkers, when possible.

- Avoid entering homes and facilities to aid passengers, if possible.
- Seat passengers in the seats farthest from you, and have them use available rear entry doors. If only one entrance is available and you are not assisting the passenger, you can exit the vehicle before a passenger enters or exits it to maintain social distance.
- Use a larger vehicle, such as a cutaway bus or van when feasible, to allow greater physical distance between vehicle occupants. If possible, block the seats closest to your driver's seat to ensure social distancing.
- Limit passenger loads whenever possible, unless passengers are immediate family or personal aides.

Wear a [cloth mask](#) in public and at work, even when [social distancing](#). Cloth masks may prevent people who don't know they have the virus from spreading it to others. The spread of COVID-19 can be reduced when cloth masks are used along with other [preventive measures](#), including [social distancing](#). A universal face covering policy can be effective in preventing the transmission of the virus [in close-contact interactions](#).

- Be careful when putting on, wearing, and taking off cloth [masks](#):
 - Do not touch your cloth mask while wearing it.
 - Do not touch your face, mouth, nose, or eyes while taking off the cloth mask.
 - Wash your hands before putting on and after taking off the cloth mask.
 - [Wash](#) the mask after each use.
- Ensure cloth masks do not create a new risk (for example, interferes with driving or vision, or contributes to heat-related illness) that exceeds their COVID-19 related benefits of slowing the spread of the virus.
- For those with sensory, cognitive, or behavioral issues, cloth masks may be difficult to wear, especially for extended periods of time. CDC provides information on [adaptations and alternatives](#) that should be considered when cloth masks may not be feasible.
- If you are concerned about the use of cloth masks at your workplace, discuss them with your employer.
- Consider carrying a spare cloth mask.
- Ask passengers to wear cloth masks unless they are having trouble breathing, they cannot put on or remove a cloth mask on their own, or they are under the age of 2.

[Clean and disinfect](#) frequently touched objects or surfaces.

- If possible, clean and disinfect more frequently, such as between passengers. Clean and disinfect the following areas on a routine basis or at least daily:
 - Car keys, wheelchair lifts, wheelchair securements, steering wheels, handrails, door handles, digital touchscreens, fareboxes, fingerprint scanners, and other commonly touched surfaces in the passenger boarding and seating areas
- Avoid touching your face, mouth, nose, or eyes when handling frequently touched items.

- Follow the directions on the cleaning product's label.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after touching frequently touched objects or surfaces.

Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. You don't need to wear gloves if you wash your hands regularly (unless they are already required for your job).


- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol if soap and water aren't available.
- Wash your hands at these key times:
 - Before, during, and after preparing food.
 - Before eating food.
 - After using the toilet.
 - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
 - After putting on, touching, or removing cloth face coverings or masks.
 - Before and after work and work breaks.
 - Before and after contact with a passenger.
 - After handling cash and/or fare cards.
 - Before and after fueling.

Do not touch your face, mouth, nose, or eyes.

Cover your coughs and sneezes.

- Use tissues to cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow.
- Throw used tissues in a lined driver-only trash receptacle.
 - Place lined trash receptacles at the rear of vehicle for passengers.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol when soap and water are not available.

Avoid using the recirculated air option for the vehicle's ventilation during and immediately after transporting a passenger.

- Make sure the vehicle is [well ventilated](#)  . Use the vehicle's vents to bring in fresh outside air, and lower the rear vehicle windows if outdoor conditions allow and it does not pose a health or safety risk to passengers.
- After transporting passengers, allow for sufficient air exchanges to remove any potentially infectious particles.

When no alternative transportation is available, and it is necessary to transport a passenger *who has* a confirmed case of COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19, or *who has* had [close contact](#) in the past two weeks with someone confirmed to have COVID-19:

- Contact your employer to discuss your concerns if you feel unsafe transporting the passenger or if you are at [increased risk of severe illness](#).
- Follow the CDC recommendations for [transporting known or suspected persons with COVID-19 using non-emergency vehicle services](#).
- If available, turn on the rear exhaust ventilation in addition to supplying outside air through the front vents.
- Ensure the passenger wears a cloth mask, if appropriate. Wearing cloth masks may be difficult for individuals with physical, sensory, cognitive, or behavioral impairments, and is not recommended for children under age 2 years or for anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the cloth mask without assistance.
- After transporting the passenger, [clean and disinfect](#) the vehicle and [wash your hands](#).

How to Cope with Stress

[Mental health](#) and [emotional well-being](#) are important parts of worker safety and health. The COVID-19 pandemic has created new challenges in the ways many people work and connect with others, which may raise feelings of stress, anxiety, or depression. It is important to pay attention to these in yourself and others and be aware of resources available to manage them.







Information and resources about mental health, knowing signs of stress, taking steps to manage stress, and knowing where to go if you need help are available [here](#).

How Your Employer Can Protect You

Your employer should develop a COVID-19 response plan and share it with you. We created a [fact sheet to help your employer](#).

How to Get More Information

You, as the employer, are responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns and informing employees of the hazards in your workplace. You can utilize these additional sources for more information on reducing the risk of exposures to COVID-19 at work:

- [CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [CDC Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#)
- [CDC Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 Cleaning and Disinfection for Non-emergency Transport Vehicles](#)
- [NIOSH Workplace Safety and Health Topic: COVID-19](#)
- [CDC COVID-19](#)
- [CDC Infection Control Guidance for Healthcare Professionals about Coronavirus](#)
- [American Public Transit Association COVID-19](#) 
- [OSHA COVID-19 Emergency Response](#) 
- [Federal Transit Administration COVID-19](#) 
- [OSHA COVID-19](#) 
- [OSHA Guidelines on Preparing Workplaces for COVID](#)  
- CDCINFO: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636) | TTY: 1-888-232-6348 | website: cdc.gov/info

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Content source: [National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases \(NCIRD\), Division of Viral Diseases](#)