



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Transit
Administration**

SA 20-1

Safety Advisory

Subject: RECOMMENDED ACTIONS TO REDUCE THE RISK OF CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19) AMONG TRANSIT EMPLOYEES AND PASSENGERS

Purpose: During the COVID-19 public health emergency, transit agencies across the country are continuing to provide millions of trips a day to lifeline services and to carry healthcare and other essential workers to critical jobs. This Safety Advisory recommends that transit agencies develop and implement procedures and practices consistent with all applicable guidance and information provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to ensure the continued safety of transit passengers and employees during this national emergency.

Disclaimer: This Safety Advisory is considered guidance pursuant to 49 CFR § 5.25. The information in this Safety Advisory does not have the force and effect of law. This Safety Advisory is not legally binding in its own right and will not be relied upon by the Department as a separate basis for affirmative enforcement action or other administrative penalty. Conformity with this Safety Advisory is voluntary only and nonconformity will not affect rights and obligations under existing statutes and regulations. If you have questions relating to COVID-19, please contact the CDC directly.

Background: In late 2019, the World Health Organization was notified of patients with pneumonia of an unknown cause in China, later identified as a new type of coronavirus, severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).¹ SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes coronavirus disease (COVID-19), is confirmed or believed to have spread to most countries worldwide, including the United States.² In response to the emerging public health risk posed by COVID-19 in the United States, the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) declared a public health emergency on January 31, 2020.³ To further bolster the United States' response, on March 13, 2020, President Donald J. Trump declared a national emergency related to the COVID-19 outbreak.⁴ This Safety Advisory will remain in effect for the duration of the

¹ World Health Organization Situation Report, January 21, 2020: https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200121-sitrep-1-2019-ncov.pdf?sfvrsn=20a99c10_4.

² CDC Travel Health Notices. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>.

³ HHS Secretary Determination that a Public Health Emergency Exists: <https://www.phe.gov/emergency/news/healthactions/phe/Pages/2019-nCoV.aspx>.

⁴ Proclamation on Declaring a National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-declaring-national-emergency-concerning-novel-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-outbreak/>.

Secretary of Health and Human Services' declaration of a public health emergency regarding COVID-19, issued January 31, 2020.

COVID-19 can cause mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. In some serious cases, COVID-19 can be fatal.⁵ No existing vaccines prevent COVID-19. This means that the only known way to prevent illness is to avoid exposure to the virus. Current information indicates that the virus is mainly spread person-to-person through the respiratory droplets an infected person produces when they cough, sneeze, or talk. Recent studies indicate that an infected person can transmit the virus even if they are not showing symptoms. This means that someone who appears and feels healthy could spread the virus without knowing it.⁶

Current CDC recommendations for protecting against spread of COVID-19 include maintaining a physical separation of at least six feet from other people, regular and thorough hand washing, wearing a cloth mask or other face covering when around others, and cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces daily.⁷

Recommended Actions⁸: FTA recommends that transit agencies take the following actions to reduce the likelihood that transit employees, contractors, and members of the public contract or spread the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19, consistent with current CDC⁹ and OSHA¹⁰ guidance:¹¹

1. Establish and implement policies and procedures for transit agency employees and passengers regarding the use of face coverings and personal protective equipment to reduce the risk of COVID-19 among employees and passengers.

⁵ CDC Coronavirus Frequently Asked Questions: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>.

⁶ CDC How to Protect Yourself & Others: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>.

⁷ Id.

⁸ The Americans with Disabilities Act and the U.S. Department of Transportation's implementing regulations at 49 CFR Parts 27, 37, 38, and 39 apply to any policies and procedures that transit agencies develop pursuant to these recommended actions.

⁹ Recommendation Regarding the Use of Cloth Face Coverings, Especially in Areas of Significant Community-Based Transmission: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>; What Bus Transit Operators Need to Know About COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/bus-transit-operator.html>; What Rail Transit Operators Need to Know About COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/rail-transit-operator.html>; What Transit Maintenance Workers Need to Know About COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/transit-maintenance-worker.html>; What Transit Station Workers Need to Know About COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/transit-station-workers.html>; CDC's Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>; CDC's Workplace, Home and School Guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/workplace-school-and-home-guidance.pdf>.

¹⁰ OSHA's COVID-19 guidance page: <https://www.osha.gov/coronavirus>.

¹¹ The guidance referenced in this Safety Advisory is current as of the date of this Advisory. In the event of any differences between recommendations in this document and guidance issued by CDC or OSHA, the CDC and OSHA guidance should be followed.

2. Establish and implement policies and procedures for routine cleaning and disinfection of surfaces frequently touched by employees and passengers, including equipment, digital interfaces such as touchscreens and fingerprint scanners, vehicles, and facilities to reduce the risk of COVID-19 among employees and passengers.
3. Establish and implement measures to create physical separation greater than 6 feet between transit facility employees, transit operators, and passengers.
4. Establish and implement policies and procedures that reinforce healthy hygiene practices, including policies to provide sufficient opportunities for employees to practice healthy hygiene and to ensure transit vehicles and facilities are appropriately cleaned.
5. Revise policies, procedures and measures developed and implemented pursuant to this Safety Advisory as new or revised CDC and OSHA guidance becomes available.

Pursuant to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, FTA allocated \$25 billion to recipients of urbanized area and rural area formula funds, which transit agencies should use to support implementation of the recommendations in this Safety Advisory. CARES Act funding is eligible to cover 100 percent of the costs to develop and implement all actions recommended in this Safety Advisory. Title XII of Division B of CARES Act, Pub. L. 116-136. Under FTA's Emergency Relief Program (49 U.S.C 5324), funding also may be available through FTA's formula grant programs. Additionally, funding may be available from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. *See* Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. 5121-5207; FEMA fact sheet: <https://www.fema.gov/news-release/2020/03/13/covid-19-emergency-declaration>.

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