

Colorado's Governor issues statewide mask mandate

Governor Polis issued a statewide mandate requiring Coloradans to wear a mask when in public, indoor spaces. The mandate applies to anyone 10 years or older. Masks must also be worn by people who are waiting outdoors for a taxi, bus, light rail, car service, rideshare or other mass transit or similar transportation service.

Violators may be “subject to civil or criminal penalties, including but not limited to prosecution for trespass,” the order says.

The mask order takes effect on Friday. Businesses must post signs about the mandate and “must refuse entry or service to people who are not wearing masks,” the governor’s office says.

“No mask, no service. It’s simple,” Polis said as he announced the order at a news conference at the governor’s mansion. “... This is a law like any other.”

Polis said data shows that the virus has spread less in areas of the state that have already implemented a mask-wearing mandate. There are 39 Colorado counties and municipalities that already have mandatory mask orders in place. He said those numbers played heavily into his decision to issue the statewide order. People who cannot tolerate a face covering are exempt, as are people who are hearing impaired, seated at a restaurant, are exercising alone or with people from their own household or receiving a personal service. First responders are also exempt, as are those officiating a religious service or who are giving a speech for broadcast to an audience.

Dr. Rachel Herlihy, Colorado’s state epidemiologist, said that on average each person infected with coronavirus is now spreading the disease to just under two others. That’s an ominous, sobering sign that the disease could soon spread exponentially in Colorado where it had been mostly stagnant. Herlihy also said that out-of-state visitors, who have been flocking to Colorado, could be partially to blame for the state’s uptick in cases and hospitalizations.

Polis compared a mask-wearing rule to speed limits: some rules have to be enacted to keep the general public safe. “This is the least bad of the options we have at our disposal,” Polis said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [now recommends mask wearing](#), and [studies have shown](#) the practice dramatically reduces disease transmission and, in turn, deaths. One study published last month in the [journal Health Affairs](#) concluded that mask mandates in the United States may have averted 230,000 to 450,000 cases of COVID-19 between March 31 and May 22 in jurisdictions that imposed them.