

Gov. Evers Issues Executive Order Declaring Public Health Emergency and Requiring Face Coverings Statewide

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today declared a Public Health Emergency and issued an Emergency Order requiring individuals to wear face coverings when indoors and not in a private residence, with some exceptions as clarified and defined in the order. The order is effective at 12:01 a.m. on Saturday, August 1, 2020, and will expire on September 28, 2020 or by a subsequent superseding order. Executive Order #82 declaring a public health emergency is available [here](#) and Emergency Order #1 requiring face coverings statewide is available [here](#).

“While our local health departments have been doing a heck of a job responding to this pandemic in our communities, the fact of the matter is, this virus doesn't care about any town, city, or county boundary, and we need a statewide approach to get Wisconsin back on track,” said Gov. Evers. “We’ve said all along that we’re going to let science and public health experts be our guide in responding to this pandemic, and we know that masks and face coverings will save lives. While I know emotions are high when it comes to wearing face coverings in public, my job as governor is to put people first and to do what's best for the people of our state, so that's what I am going to do.”

Wisconsin is seeing new and significant community spread and increase in cases of COVID-19 which requires that we declare a new public health emergency and require face coverings. Wisconsin has experienced a drastic rise in COVID-19 cases throughout the entire state, with 61 of 72 counties (84 percent) representing 96 percent of the state’s population experiencing high COVID-19 activity. All regions of Wisconsin have high COVID-19 activity levels. This is a dramatic increase from where Wisconsin was in June, when only 15 of 72 counties (21%) experiencing high COVID-19 activity.

The average number of new confirmed cases of COVID-19 has drastically increased throughout July, with an average of 556 new cases each day between July 1-7, an average of 764 new cases each day between July 8-14 (a 37% increase from the previous week), an average of 890 new cases each day between July 15-21 (a 16% increase from the previous week), and an average of 938 new cases each day between July 22-26 (a 5% increase from the previous week).

Under this order, Wisconsin residents ages five and older are required to wear a face covering when they are indoors or in an enclosed space with anyone outside their household living unit. Face coverings are strongly recommended if outdoors when maintaining physical distancing is not possible. The order also enumerates exceptions to the requirement, listing activities such as when an individual is eating, drinking, or swimming. Individuals with health conditions or disabilities that would preclude the wearing of a face covering safely are also exempt from the requirement. A frequently asked questions (FAQ) document is available [here](#).

“The data is what drives our decisions, and that data tells us we have significant community spread in Wisconsin and need to take statewide action,” said DHS Secretary-designee Andrea Palm. “Community spread means that any interaction out in the community can mean exposure, and because people can spread COVID-19 without symptoms or even knowing they are sick, we need to take universal precautions in order for wearing face coverings to be effective.”

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the medical and scientific community continues to learn more about the virus, including how to best prevent its transmission. Recent scientific studies show that wearing face coverings is very effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

“Staying home, limiting interactions, practicing physical distancing, and washing your hands thoroughly are still the most effective way to stop the spread,” said Dr. Ryan Westergaard, Wisconsin’s Chief Medical Officer and the State Epidemiologist for Communicable Diseases. “But we learn something new about this virus every day. A growing number of scientific studies tell us that face coverings, when used correctly and consistently by a large percentage of the community, are extremely effective for preventing the spread of COVID-19 through respiratory droplets.”