



RAYMOND F. PRZYBELSKI, DIRECTOR
(715) 345-5350 or Toll Free (866) 920-2525
FAX (715) 345-5966

RUTH GILFRY HUMAN RESOURCES BUILDING
817 WHITING AVENUE
STEVENS POINT, WI 54481-5292

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
ccpublichealth@co.portage.wi.us

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ONLINE FORM FOR MASKING CONCERNS UNDER EMERGENCY ORDER #1 NOW AVAILABLE

A new online form is available for Portage County community members to submit concerns regarding violations of Emergency Order #1, which asks Wisconsin residents to wear a face covering in certain situations. Below are the reasons why Wisconsin counties are responding with this type of process.

- 1) Counties have been tasked with creating a process for potential enforcement under Emergency Order #1. Protecting the health and safety of our residents is our top priority and we follow the guidance provided regardless of which party controls the Legislature or the Governor's Office. These orders are based in statute (i.e. the law) and we will follow the state's guidance until a court invalidates the orders, they are superseded, or they expire.
- 2) Capacity within the Division of Public Health is limited. An electronic form provides the public with a place to share their concerns and allows our public health professionals to follow up when time allows.
- 3) We have been able to rely upon assistance from our public health staff. These staff members also have important work in other areas of the Department of Health and Human Services that must be completed by public health personnel. We ask that you have patience as we continue to hire and train new people to maintain capacity to process test data, conduct contact tracing, and assist the community with our response(s) to COVID-19.
- 4) Our work—like the virus—is apolitical. As public health professionals, we will ensure that we are here for the community and that we are following all local, state, and national guidance. Our focus remains on fighting the virus and supporting our entire community.

We would like to take this time to remind everyone that the Governor's orders **do not** require anyone to verify the reason they are not wearing a face covering. Wearing a face covering is a simple act of kindness and is one of the most effective ways to limit the spread of COVID-19 and save lives. This is the reason you see face masks worn by our healthcare professionals, law enforcement, members of the military, and why we wear ours. We hope that you will wear yours too. The Governor stated that as a member of the community, we should not take it upon ourselves to police the community for those that are not wearing a mask. See below for the statement from the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document that accompanied this order.

Q: What do I do if I see someone not wearing a mask, even though they should be?

A: Nothing. Some people have conditions or circumstances that would make wearing a cloth face covering difficult or dangerous. Just wear your mask and stay six feet away.

We ask that you follow the guidance from the Governor and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. Members of the community will have varying opinions on this issue. We hope you will find a way to be polite and respectful to those with different opinions. Ultimately, we hope that everyone will honor the orders and the face covering requirements businesses and others had in place before these orders went into effect. As a reminder, masks are required in Portage County buildings and meeting spaces. We thank you for respecting our policy.

The new form can be found at this link: <https://www.co.portage.wi.us/department/health-and-human-services/division-of-public-health/covid-19-coronavirus-disease-2019/forms/-fsiteid-1> and can also be accessed on the Portage County homepage in the "Spotlight" section (see red box in the image to the right). Portage County Division of Public Health will receive submitted forms and follow-up appropriately.

The process that the Division of Public Health has created is in line with the guidance from the state and the Department of Justice. We will continue to stress education and outreach on this topic and all other issues related to COVID-19. The best laws are those that never need to be enforced because people are doing what is right for their community.

If enforcement of the order is needed or recommended, those cases may be sent to the District Attorney's office for review. The Portage County Sheriff's Office will respond to reports or complaints from a business owner, manager, or other premises owner who has requested that an individual leave the premises for failing to comply with the face covering mandate as it relates to that specific premises.

Please, do not call 911 to report a face covering violation.

For more information on the Governor's order, please see the following links:

Portage County Provides More Information on Governor's Orders:

<https://www.co.portage.wi.us/home/showdocument?id=31435>

Executive Order #82:

https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/WIGOV/2020/07/30/file_attachments/1507488/EO082-PHECOVIDSecondSpike%20%28003%29.pdf

Emergency Order #1:

https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/WIGOV/2020/07/30/file_attachments/1507488/EO082-PHECOVIDSecondSpike%20%28003%29.pdf

Face Covering Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):

https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/WIGOV/2020/07/30/file_attachments/1507334/Face%20Covering%20FAQ.pdf



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