

Issuing a Local Mask Requirement

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee’s Executive Order 54, issued on Friday, July 3, 2020, grants authority to county mayors in 89 counties to issue local mask requirements or recommendations in the event of a significant rise in COVID-19 cases. This resource provides guidance regarding issuing and enforcing mask requirements.

Does my County Need a Mask Requirement?

While no single intervention alone will control a pandemic, based on the history of public health outbreaks in the U.S. and worldwide, and given the conclusions of many current public health studies, the wearing of masks by the general public can prevent a substantial number of COVID-19 infections.

There is not a single data point indicating when a mask requirement is or is not needed. The optimal time to institute preventive COVID-19 measures, including mask requirements, is **BEFORE** COVID-19 cases rise in a county. Rather, monitoring COVID-19 data trends is imperative (see Decision-Making Resources below) when implementing preventive measures such as masks, which also ensure people can continue to work, go to school, and meet their obligations.

Enforcement & Intervention

In this particular instance, violating an order is a Class A misdemeanor. However, law enforcement and local officials should utilize sound judgment, restraint, and discretion before considering strict enforcement. Law enforcement should review the mask requirement carefully, educate and warn about the requirement, and provide an opportunity to comply before strictly enforcing.

The use of face coverings by mayors and law enforcement can set an example for the community. Provide law enforcement with a supply of masks to provide to those without masks if possible, and engage with businesses to facilitate compliance with any order requiring the use of face coverings. While businesses should facilitate compliance with any county order, businesses are not charged with the order’s enforcement.

The Bottom Line

- If enough people wear masks and face coverings, we can prevent up to 80 percent of COVID-19 cases.
- The sooner mask usage is adopted, the more effective they will be at controlling the community-wide spread of disease.
- Mask wearing, in combination with social distancing and strict hand hygiene, is even more effective than any of these measures alone.

Decision-Making Resources	Local Order Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tennessee Department of Health: County-specific data on case counts and new cases. • Tennessee County Services Association: Aggregated local, state, and federal COVID-19 orders and resources. • CDC Community Mitigation Strategy: Actions a community can take to prepare for and mitigate COVID-19 transmission. • Google Community Mobility Report: County-level overview of COVID-19 movement trends. 	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> Knox County Madison County Shelby County </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> Hamilton County Montgomery County Williamson County </div> </div> <hr/> <p><i>Social distancing and masking, but not lockdown, resulted in substantial reduction in infection, with 80 percent to 90 percent masking eventually eliminating the disease.</i> "Universal Masking is Urgent in the COVID-19 Pandemic"</p>

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention and other national and global health organizations recommend the safe, widespread use of cloth face masks as one of many preventive measures to control the spread of COVID-19.