



# The New PUBLIC SAFETY

BY JULIA ZIEMER

Coronavirus has made our lives everchanging. The ability to stay on top of newly released information, which feels like a daily occurrence, is challenging. We all know the basics: wash your hands frequently, wear a mask, stay home when possible, and avoid large gatherings. Sadly, these suggestions also make it difficult to stay connected to loved ones and our community.

Public transportation is integral to maintaining independence and autonomy for older adults. The Dane County transit system has been struggling to keep up with public needs and the need to keep the public and workers safe. While we're all concerned about coronavirus exposure when we're out and about, there are ways to mitigate the risks.

At Union Cab, we've developed policies to keep drivers and riders safe. We require all workers, drivers, and office staff to diligently practice good hygiene; wear masks; and practice social distancing, remaining at least six feet from others. We supply drivers with cleaning supplies to clean and sanitize their cabs after each ride, and all of our cabs are stocked with hand sanitizer, masks, and tissue.

**We require all workers, drivers, and office staff to diligently practice good hygiene; wear masks; and practice social distancing, remaining at least six feet from others.**

We also require all passengers properly wear masks during their rides and only allow them to ride in the back seats to maximize social distancing. These measures reduce the risk of viral transmission, and we believe that currently traveling by cab is safer than mass transit, where passengers are exposed to more people.

Some of the questions we're frequently asked regard masks. It's been a hard adjustment for everyone. The CDC recommends cloth masks with three layers that can be washed and reused. For people who don't have their own masks, many businesses are providing disposable masks. Current research suggests that the least-safe options are bandanas and gator scarves.

A mask helps keep the wearer's germs more contained and closer to their body so that, when done in conjunction with social distancing, transmission is much less likely to occur. Masks reduce airborne particles, keeping everyone safer.

Granted, there are numerous reasons people find wearing a mask difficult. It may be harder to breathe, glasses can fog up, and it can be hot and uncomfortable. Communicating while wearing a mask is also a tricky new skill many of us are still learning, and, sadly, masks obscure beautiful faces!

The positives of wearing a mask far outweigh the negatives, especially since coronavirus can be carried by a person who shows no signs of having the virus. Every person we come into contact with is a potential carrier, so taking universal precautions are necessary to stay safe and reduce infection numbers. And when you go out, contact the businesses you'll be visiting to find out

what precautions they're taking to keep people safe. The more we know, the safer we remain.

Don't forget an often overlooked effect of coronavirus: losing touch and feeling alone. Call friends and family to stay connected, and be sure to ask if they need your help. And be sure to ask for help yourself if there's anything you need or don't understand. Doing what we can to keep ourselves and others safe, and making sure no one is left alone or feels alone, is one the kindest and most respectful things we can do for one another.

Stay safe and connected!

*Julia Ziemer is a sales and marketing representative at Union Cab of Madison Cooperative.*



If you have questions about where to find resources and public health information, dial 211 to talk with operators about your concerns and explain the help you need. It's a very valuable resource. And if you have computer access, visit the Wisconsin Department of Health Services website ([dhs.wisconsin.gov](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov)), which is loaded with helpful information.

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