

November 23, 2020

Face coverings are mandatory in Red Deer

On November 23, 2020, City Council passed Bylaw 3656/2020: The Face Covering in Public Places Bylaw. This bylaw requires face coverings be worn inside most indoor public places and in public vehicles, unless otherwise exempted under the bylaw.

1. Why is this bylaw necessary?

Health experts continue to stress the importance of face coverings as a measure to help limit the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. Specifically, face coverings are recommended in public spaces when physical distancing (two metres) is not possible, as well as in any indoor environments where people who are not immediate family members are congregating together.

As the number of COVID-19 cases continues to rise in Red Deer, and across the province, mandatory face coverings are a temporary measure that could help reduce the number of local cases and hospitalizations in our city. Through this bylaw, The City of Red Deer is putting into action, the recommendations of health officials because the safety, health and wellbeing of all citizens continues to be our number one priority.

2. What is a face covering?

A face covering means a medical or non-medical mask or other face covering, including a bandana, face shield, scarf or other fabric that covers the nose, mouth and chin to create a barrier that limits the transmission of respiratory droplets.

3. When does the bylaw take effect?

The bylaw takes effect on November 30, 2020; however, The City of Red Deer strongly encourages citizens to wear a face covering in accordance with the bylaw starting today.

4. For the purposes of this bylaw, what constitutes a public place?

Under the new Face Covering in Public Places Bylaw, citizens must wear a face covering in most indoor public places and public vehicles. This includes all or any part of a building, structure or enclosed area, whether publicly or privately owned, where members of the public are typically permitted without special permission including, but not limited to, retail and grocery stores, professional office buildings, and civic facilities.

5. Are there any exemptions to the bylaw?

There are some exemptions under the approved bylaw including:

- children under nine years old
- those who are unable to place, use or remove a face covering safely without assistance
- those with an underlying medical condition, mental concern or disability, which inhibits their ability to wear a face covering
- those who are eating/drinking
- people engaged in an athletic or fitness activity
- those engaged in heavy and physically demanding labour
- caregivers who are providing care or assistance to a person with a disability in circumstances where the caregiver wearing a face covering would hinder the ability of the caregiver to care for or assist the person with the disability
- a person employed in a public place or operating the public vehicle where the person is separated from others with an installed screen, shield or barrier;

Addition exemptions to the bylaw include:

- School, Universities and Colleges;
- Hospitals and Health Care Facilities;
- Child Care Facilities; and
- areas within a public place or public vehicle so long as physical barriers or physical distancing practices maintain separation between employees.

6. How will The City determine whether an exemption is legitimate?

There are physical and mental health conditions that may complicate the use of face coverings or make wearing a face covering more challenging. If individuals are concerned about whether they should be exempt from the bylaw, they are encouraged to discuss their concerns with their physician or another member of their healthcare team. The City of Red Deer will not compel individuals to produce a physician's note or other "exemption card." Based on an analysis of face covering mandates in other communities, such requirements may create undue burden on the healthcare system, with people making appointments solely to seek exemptions from the bylaw. In all circumstances, where an individual is not able to wear a mask due to any reason, physical distancing must be maintained.

7. How will the bylaw be enforced?

Bylaw officers and RCMP will enforce the bylaw in a similar manner to enforcement around mass gathering restrictions. This may include things such as walk-throughs in grocery stores, churches, restaurants, bars and malls, to name a few. However, for the time being, our primary focus is on education and voluntary compliance as we work to balance the need for enforcement with a number of other large and competing policing priorities in our community.

8. Is there a fine for those who choose not to wear a face covering?

The fine for failing to comply with this bylaw is \$50.

9. What else is The City of Red Deer doing to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

In addition to passing a mandatory face coverings bylaw, last week (Monday, November 16, 2020) City Council endorsed the following recommendations that state The City of Red Deer will:

- advocate to the Government of Alberta that COVID-19 related health restrictions be applied at the regional level, if not province wide, in order to ensure greater consistency between proximal municipalities whose citizens are likely to travel to and from such municipalities and interact regularly.
- advocate to the Government of Alberta to request more timely and responsive communications regarding COVID-19 related data and announcements to municipalities, namely The City of Red Deer, prior to information being shared with the public.
- update Red Deer City Council on current COVID-19 status in the city of Red Deer; actions being taken to curb community transmission; and, progress on targeted communications within the community.
- increase communications and engagement with Red Deer citizens, businesses and the community as a whole.

More information about what The City is doing, and what decisions and actions have taken place to date can be found on The City's website at <https://www.reddeer.ca/whats-happening/covid-19/what-is-the-city-doing/>

10. What can you do to help?

If you are a business and/or property owner or operator, please post signage in your business, building or facility, encouraging patrons and guests to wear face coverings. The City of Red Deer has some temporary signage available for public use on its website at www.reddeer.ca/masks/.