

Mbalula outlines new Covid-19 rules for taxis

Transport Minister Fikile Mbalula has urged taxi operators to adhere to the regulations set out for public transport in order to protect themselves and passengers from coronavirus.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

Mbalula briefed media on Thursday, following President Cyril Ramaphosa's address to the nation on Sunday where he introduced risk-adjusted regulations as the number of Covid-19 infections rises exponentially in the country.

For the taxi industry, these new regulations include, among others, the mandatory use of face masks (or other appropriate item covering both mouth and nose) by all those in the taxi; sanitising of passengers before boarding and alighting; the use of jammers to keep windows open by at least 5cm, and a 70% loading capacity for inter-provincial travel, while local taxis will now be able to carry passengers to full capacity (100% load).

Mbalula said the regulations were introduced after wide consultations, in an effort to contain the spread of the virus.

"Consultations with health experts were undertaken and their additional recommendations in the face of the increased loading capacity were duly considered and accepted," said the Minister, adding that preserving livelihoods was not an easy balance to strike.

Safety first

Mbalula said disinfecting of vehicles, sanitising and social distancing have been in placed squarely in the hands of public transport vehicle owners.

Meanwhile, no operator may allow anyone to enter their vehicle without wearing a cloth face mask, homemade item, or another appropriate item that covers the nose and mouth.

"Similarly, drivers and other employees must wear face mask or appropriate item that covers the nose and mouth, together with a face shield," said the Minister.

According to the Department of Transport, you also need to wear a protective mask if you are driving with other passengers in your own private vehicle.

Local transportation

Buses, taxis, e-hailing, meter taxis, shuttle services, chauffeur-driven vehicles and scholar transport vehicles are also permitted to load 100% of licensed carry capacity for any trip not regarded as long-distance travel, which refers to any trip that is 200km or longer.

Also, commuter rail is permitted to carry 70% of licensed carry capacity.

Operators must sanitise vehicles before picking up and after dropping off passengers. Areas to be sanitised also includes vehicle doors, window handles, armrests and handrails.

Meanwhile, passengers must sanitise after they enter the vehicle and after getting off the vehicle. Marshals, security officers and passengers are obliged to wear a cloth face mask that covers nose and mouth throughout the journey.

"No person or passenger will be allowed to use any form of public transport or enter a building, place or premises if they do not wear a cloth face mask or a homemade item or another appropriate item that covers nose and mouth," Mbalula stressed.

In addition, intra-provincial, metropolitan areas and district public transport are permitted to operate without the requirement for a permit.

Permits

Long-distance travel is permitted for a person permitted to travel between provinces in terms of level 3 and permits remain compulsory, Mbalula explained.

"Law enforcement authorities have a duty to enforce compliance with the law. This is a necessary evil, whose sole purpose is to curb the spread of the virus across provincial epicentres," he said.

He said mini and midi-bus taxi vehicles and buses may not carry more than 70% of their maximum licensed passenger-carrying capacity for long-distance intra-provincial travel and permitted inter-provincial travel.

Transportation of liquor

The President put a suspension on the sale, dispensing and distribution of alcohol, as well as reinstated a curfew between 9pm and 4am.

The Minister explained, however, that the transportation of liquor is only permitted for movement from a manufacturing plant to storage facilities, and from manufacturing facilities to exit ports for export.

"Transportation of liquor for sale, dispensing and distribution to customers is prohibited," said Mbalula.

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