

GOVERNMENT TAKES MEASURES TO MITIGATE THE SPREAD OF COVID 19 ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT (Part 2)

By Mukela Mangolwa

In the last few weeks Zambia has experienced an increase in the number of Corona Virus cases detected on a daily basis. It is clear from the Ministry of Health's regular announcements that the pandemic is on the upswing and we need to make concerted efforts to prevent further spread of the disease.

Apart from public gatherings such as funerals and churches, public transport has been identified as one of the key avenues through which the Corona Virus is spreading.

In line with the revised Government strategy and measures on the fight against COVID 19, in an effort to prevent the spread of the virus through the public road transport system (buses, Taxis and Trucks), the Government through the Ministry of Transport and Communications has developed Standard Operating Procedures aimed at mitigating the spread of the virus in the public transport sector.

As the Road Transport and safety Agency (RTSA) we want to urge all Public Transport operators in Zambia to comply with these guidelines without fail.

In last week's column we had highlighted the challenges faced by the sector and also briefly touched on strategies that have been introduced to mitigate the spread. This week we dedicate this column to highlight the details of the guidelines which are as follows:

All Public Service Vehicles (PSVs), both on the intercity and local routes should carry the stipulated number of passengers in accordance with the registration requirement. Carrying passengers above the registration requirement is strictly forbidden. Crews, operators and passengers must ensure that buses and taxis are not overloaded at any given time to prevent the spread of the Virus.

All passengers and conductors must wear masks to cover their nose and mouth throughout the period of the journey without fail. Any person who contravenes this requirement during or before the journey must not be allowed to enter a passenger vehicle and proceed on the journey. It is therefore the responsibility of both the crew to ensure that the passengers adhere to this requirement and vice versa for the crew.

Further, all PSVs are expected to be fully disinfected before loading passengers for any route or trip. The operators must provide the necessary cleaning and disinfection materials while designated crews must ensure that vehicles are clean and disinfected

All Passenger Transport operators must provide alcohol- based sanitizers on their vehicles for use by crews. Passengers are encouraged to carry their own hand sanitizers to be used during the journey. Therefore, all must wash their hands with soap and running water or sanitize hands using an alcohol –based sanitizer before entering public transport, during the journey and after immediately disembarking

The guidelines has also made it mandatory for all public passenger transport operators to provide temperature readers to test each passenger before boarding the bus/taxi. It is therefore, the duty of the crew to carry out these responsibilities.

Whilst at bus stations, bus stops and in transit public service vehicles should allow free flow of air by opening windows to allow fresh air to circulate freely. PSV crews and passengers must avoid handshakes, hugs or kissing, touching bus surfaces unless where necessary whilst on the bus. Crew and passengers must practice respiratory hygiene by covering their mouth and nose with a flexed elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing. Throw the tissue into a bin immediately and wash hands r sanitize hands

As an Agency we also strongly urge bus operators and crews to use all available communication tools like onboard music systems, P.As, posters and media announcements to remind passengers on good hygiene practices such as washing hands, using sanitizers and wearing face masks as often as possible throughout the journey

Last but not least it is also a requirement that all trucks should park at designated Parking areas and avoid parking along the roads in cities and towns, The Zambia Police Traffic Division and the RTSA will be working together to enforce these Standard Operating Procedures in order to ensure that they are adhered to with immediate effect.

As we are all aware by now, this fight against the pandemic calls for concerted efforts from all stakeholders. Our call to operators is that they shouldn't risk having their Road Service Licence withdrawn due to non-compliance to these guidelines.

Be road smart, life is precious.

N.B: STAND A CHANCE TO WIN VARIOUS ROAD SAFETY ITEMS BY LIKING OUR FACEBOOK PAGE AND MAKE A PROMISE TO BE A GOOD ROAD USER BY CLICKING ON THE "ROAD SAFETY PLEDGE CAMPAIGN" LINK AT www.facebook/askrtsa.com OR www.rtsa.org.zm AND FILL IN THE ATTACHED FORM TO MAKE YOUR PLEDGE

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