



Road Safety

With Frederick Mubanga



DAILY NATION Friday June 11, 2021

- Road Transport and Safety Agency -

PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND BUS STATIONS HOTSPOTS FOR THE RAPID SPREAD OF THE COVID – 19 PANDEMIC

...as RTSA calls for mandatory wearing of face masks on public transport.

THE increased number of Covid-19 cases in the country poses a great challenge to the public transport system, a situation that calls for heightened application of public health measures with regards to public transportation.

Mass public transportation vehicles such as buses have been identified as hotspots for the rapid spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Ministry of Health has also identified bus stations as super spreaders of the Covid-19 pandemic.



RTSA Director and Chief Executive Officer Gladwell Banda said the Covid-19 poses a serious risk on public transport and reminded all PSV drivers and passengers of their legal obligation to wear face masks on public transport

Recently, Ministry of Health Permanent Secretary for Technical Services Dr. Kennedy Malama stated that only individual and community effort would make a difference in the fight against the pandemic.

“Our call remains to the public to heed our guidance regarding mass gatherings including risk facilities such as public transport and bus stations,” Dr. Malama said.

As a regulator of public

transportation in the country, The Road Transport and Safety Agency (RTSA) has called on all Public Service Vehicle (PSV) drivers and passengers to be vigilant in observing public health guidelines as prescribed by the Ministry of Health in the fight against the Covid-19.

RTSA Director and Chief Executive Officer Gladwell Banda said the Covid-19 poses a serious risk on public transport and reminded all PSV drivers and passengers of their legal obligation to wear face masks on public transport and follow all public health guidelines to mitigate the risk of the spread of the coronavirus in line with Statutory Instrument No. 22 of 2020 – the Public Health (Infected Area) (Coronavirus Diseases 2019) Regulation 2020.

“Mass public transportation vehicles such as buses have been identified as hotspots for the rapid spread of the Covid-19 virus. The travelling public is therefore advised to always put on face masks when using public transport. The proper use of face masks can significantly reduce the probability of contagion” Mr. Banda said.

Mr. Banda stated that the RTSA working with the Zambia Police will ensure total compliance to mandatory use of face masks in public transportation.

To this effect, bus drivers, bus conductors and all passenger PSV operators have been instructed not to allow any person on a bus or taxi without a face mask.

Further, all PSV operators are guided to provide facilities for regular hand washing or sanitising at all bus stations.

The RTSA with guidance from the ministries of Transport and Health will continue working on modalities to provide alternative strategies and measures to mitigate the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic in public transportation.

Mr. Banda cautioned all players in public transportation to heighten compliance to public health guidelines and has since urged all stakeholders to adhere to the following Standard Operating Procedures that Government developed through the Min-

istry of Transport and Communications to mitigate the spread of Covid-19 in the road transport sector:

1 Number of passengers to be carried on PSV

All public passenger vehicles (buses and taxis) both intercity and local should carry the number of passengers in line with the registration requirement. Carrying passengers above the registration requirement is strictly forbidden. Bus and Taxi owners, drivers, conductors and passengers must ensure that buses and taxis are not overloaded at any time to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

2 Mandatory masking by drivers, conductors and passengers

All passengers, drivers and conductors must wear masks to cover their nose and mouth throughout the period of the journey without fail. Any person who contravenes their requirement during or before the journey must not be allowed to enter the passenger vehicle and proceed on the journey.

3 Frequent and routine sanitisation of passenger vehicles

All public passenger vehicles are expected to be fully disinfected before loading passengers for any route/trip. The owners of the public transport vehicle must provide the necessary cleaning and disinfection materials while designated drivers and conductors must ensure that vehicles are cleaned and disinfected.

4 Provision of hand washing materials and hand sanitisers

All public passenger transport operators must provide alcohol-based sanitisers in their buses/taxis for use by drivers, conductors and passengers. Passengers are encouraged to carry their own hand sanitisers to be used during the journey.

Therefore, passengers, drivers and conductors must wash their hands with soap and running water or sanitise their hands using an alcohol-based hand sanitiser before entering the bus/taxi before embarking a public transport vehicle,



It is therefore the responsibility of both drivers and conductors to ensure that their passengers adhere to this requirement and vice versa for drivers and conductors.

during the journey and immediately after disembarking.

5 Mandatory temperature reading

All public transport



operators must provide temperature readers to test each passenger before boarding the bus/taxi. A mandatory temperature reading is therefore a requirement and it is the duty of the drivers and conductors to carry out these responsibilities.

6 Ventilation

Whilst on bus stations, bus stops and in-transit (journey period) Buses/Taxis should allow free flow of air by opening windows to allow fresh air to circulate freely.

The RTSA and Zambia Police Traffic Division are on high alert to enforce these measures and ensure total compliance in a bid to mitigate the spread of Covid-19.

Proper and correct adherence to the Standard Operating Procedures that Government developed through the Ministry of Transport and Communications to mitigate the spread of Covid-19 in the road transport sector will have high impact in protecting the lives of the travelling public and front line staff in public transportation who are key in ensuring that the wheels of the economy continue moving by making sure that there is no interruption of people, good and products.

We therefore do not need to drop the guard as the country anticipates the third wave of the Covid-19 pandemics which poses a great challenge to Zambia's public transport system, a situation that calls for heightened application of public health measures regarding public transportation.

Failure to adhere to Public Health guidelines may have catastrophic effects that may result in economic decay. Even the delivery of essential prod-

ucts such as fuel and medical consumables and services may drop, affecting the whole supply chain process if the road transport sector cripples due to the third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mass public transportation vehicles such as buses have been identified as hotspots for the rapid spread of the Covid-19 virus.

The travelling public is therefore advised to always put on face masks when using public transport.

The clarification call to all PSV drivers, passengers and the public in general to individually and collectively follow the Covid-19 pandemic public health protocols as guided by the Ministry of Health

**The author is Head – Public Relations
Road Transport and Safety Agency
Email: fmubanga@rtsa.org.zm
Website: www.rtsa.org.zm*