

## **Fragen und Antworten zur Coronaschutzverordnung ab 25. Januar 2021**

### **FAQs regarding the Coronavirus Protection Ordinance effective 25 January 2021.**

#### **Coronavirus Protection Ordinance – effective 25 January**

### **On 19 January the federal and state governments passed the extension of the current measures and regulations, as well as new regulations. When do the new regulations come into effect in North Rhine-Westphalia?**

The Ministers-President of the federal states and the Chancellor agreed on 19 January to extend the measures and regulations that came into effect on 11 January 2021 until 14 February, as well as additional measures that aim to combat the spread of the virus more effectively. The new regulations in North Rhine-Westphalia come into effect with the Coronavirus Protection Ordinance on 25 January 2021.

Minister-President Armin Laschet informed the public about the results following the federal and state discussions ([watch video](#)).

### **What contact restrictions apply?**

The following contact restrictions apply until 14 February:

Meetings in public spaces are only permitted between members of one household and one additional person. This person may be accompanied by children from their household who require supervision; with regard to custody rights, the parent living separately from the children may also be accompanied by them.

The previous exceptions to the minimum distance requirement remain largely unchanged, and can be found in § 2 para. 2 Coronavirus Protection Ordinance. These exceptions apply to, among other cases, children playing on a playground, using public transit with medical masks, or accompanying and supervising minors and other persons who require care.

### **Are there changes to the mask requirement?**

Yes. As of 25 January 2021, a medical mask must be worn in certain places. Medical masks as defined by the Coronavirus Protection Ordinance refers to surgical masks (EN 14683 – must be specified on the packaging) or masks that comply with standards KN95/N95 or FFP2. The obligation to wear a medical mask applies regardless of adherence to the minimum distance

- in retail establishments, pharmacies, petrol stations, banks, etc., as well as in medical practices and similar medical facilities,
- in public transit, and at train stations and stops,
- during religious services and other religious gatherings, including while seated.

According to federal law (SARS-CoV-2 Occupational Safety Ordinance from the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 20 January 2021), a medical mask must also be worn at the workplace in instances when the distance of 1.5 metres is not adhered to. In this event, the employer is responsible for providing the medical masks.

The mask requirement also remains in effect for the following areas, wherein a cloth mask is also sufficient:

- in enclosed public spaces, provided these spaces are accessible to customers and visitors with or without monitoring of the entrance,
- at markets and similar outdoor sales areas,
- in front of retail establishments and on their parking lots and pathways.

## **Why are cloth masks no longer sufficient in many areas?**

Face coverings have proven to be a particularly effective measure during the pandemic. Cloth masks provide less protection to the wearer than they do to the wearer's surroundings. In light of potential, particularly infectious mutations of the virus, the federal and state governments note that medical masks – also known as surgical masks, or masks compliant with the standards KN95/N95 or FFP2 – offer more protection than cloth masks do, as cloth masks do not have to fulfil any filtration standards. This means that the safety of wearing them cannot be ensured.

In accordance with the federal and state decision from 19 January 2021, medical masks must be worn in retail establishments, medical practices and public transit (including train stations and stops) in North Rhine-Westphalia as of 25 January 2021. This also applies during religious services and other religious gatherings, including while seated.

## **What are medical masks and how can they be identified?**

Medical masks include surgical masks, FFP2/FFP3 masks (without valve) and similar masks, such as coronavirus pandemic respiratory protection masks (CPA masks, e.g. KN95/N95). You have likely seen surgical masks at the doctor's office or hospital. They are made from synthetic materials, rectangular with a fold pattern, and are usually green or blue. These masks are compliant with DIN EN 14683 and are thus suitable as medical face masks. An FFP2 mask (produced as per DIN EN 149) usually consists of multi-layered white fleece and is shaped like a beak.

The properties of FFP2 masks (and similar CPA masks) are listed in [a current informational brochure from the MAGS](#). OP masks and FFP2 masks, as medical devices and personal protective equipment, must undergo a special, legally stipulated procedure before they can be marketed in Europe. They thus all include a statement from the manufacturer, a unique identifier of the model, and a CE label, with which the manufacturer declares adherence to these European safety requirements. For surgical masks, this information can be found on the packaging instead of on the mask itself.

## **What is the mask requirement for children?**

Children younger than school age remain exempt from the mask requirement. If a medical mask does not properly fit on children under 14 years of age, a cloth mask is sufficient, including in spaces where a medical mask is otherwise required.

## **Is there a home office obligation?**

The Federal Ministry of Labour has passed a regulation (SARS-CoV-2 Occupational Safety Ordinance from the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 20 January 2021) that stipulates that employers must allow employees to work from home whenever possible. This aims to reduce physical contact at the workplace and during the commute. This ordinance will come into effect shortly.

## **What legal regulations apply to food service and overnight accommodations?**

Restaurants and public houses will remain closed. This also applies to canteens and dining halls.

Only delivery and pick-up are permitted. Company canteens and dining halls at educational institutions may stay open to serve the staff and users of the educational institutions if their closure would prevent the continued work processes and permissible educational services.

Overnight accommodations for private purposes are prohibited. Overnight accommodations for business/official purposes are exempt from this.

## **Is retail closed?**

Yes. Retail will remain closed until 14 February. This does not apply to: grocery stores, delivery and pick-up services, beverage markets, farmers' markets, pharmacies, health food stores, medical stores, baby products stores, chemists, petrol stations, banks, credit unions, post offices, kiosks and newspaper sales stands, feed stores and animal needs stores, wholesale (for wholesale customers), and the serving of food by social facilities (e.g. food banks).

## **Are mail-order business and pick-up of goods by customers permitted?**

Yes. Mail-order business and the delivery of ordered goods are allowed. Customer pick-up of ordered goods is only permitted if it can be done in a contact-free manner and in accordance with anti-infection measures.

## **Are DIY warehouses allowed to open?**

DIY and garden warehouses are only allowed to serve businesses. Other persons are not allowed entry.

## **What are the regulations for schools?**

In-person instruction will be suspended until 14 February 2021.

Instruction for all classes and levels has been conducted online since Monday, 11 January 2021. This regulation also applies to graduating classes.

Extensive information about the coronavirus and school can be found on the [website of the Ministry for School and Education](#).

## **Is there a child care service at schools if the parents are unable to provide it?**

Yes. However, all parents are asked to watch their children at home when possible so as to reduce the scope of physical contact.

At the same time, since 11 January 2021 all schools have offered a child care service for students in classes 1 to 6 who cannot be watched at home or who are at risk of child endangerment.

For students with special education requirements in special schools or communal learning schools, and who require special care, e.g. in terms of mental, physical and motor development, this must be ensured in coordination with the parents or guardians, including for older students.

## **What are the regulations for day care?**

The following is in effect from 11 January 2021 until 14 February 2021:

The guarantee of day care still applies, but parents are urgently implored to watch their children whenever possible. There is no ban on entry.

Children who absolutely need to attend day care can continue to do so. Because fixed groups are required due to the current status of the coronavirus pandemic, the scope of care contractually agreed between families and facilities will be reduced by 10 hours (from 45 to 35, from 35 to 25, from 25 to 15 hours). In child day care with fixed personnel and schedules, the scope of care will remain the same as before.

If parents need help with child care, they will get help. This is available for professional, family-related or child-related reasons.

No child should have to suffer from the lockdown. Parents should engage in trusting communication with their child's day care or caretaker.

## **Are current day care services only available to parents with essential jobs?**

No. Day care is available to all children when absolutely necessary.

## **Will universities and extracurricular, public law educational services remain open?**

Instruction and examinations at universities and medical schools are permitted, pending adherence to the requirements of the Infection Protection Act.

Lectures may only be held in person if they cannot be held online or postponed without posing a severe detriment to the students.

In-person exams and preparations are only permitted if they cannot be postponed for compelling reasons, or it is not possible to relocate the students taking the exams.

## **What will happen with cultural facilities?**

Concerts and performances in theatres, operas and concert halls, cinemas and other public or private (cultural) facilities are prohibited until 14 February 2021. This also applies to museums, art exhibits, galleries, palaces, castles, memorials and similar facilities. Only drive-in theatres with a distance of 1.5 metres between the cars are allowed to operate.

## **What rules apply to professional musicians?**

Rehearsals required for professional purposes are still allowed. Professional musicians are also permitted to hold concerts and performances without an audience, to be broadcast over the radio or online.

## **What rules apply to recreational and amateur sports?**

Recreational and amateur sports are prohibited on and in all public and private sports facilities, gyms, swimming pools and similar facilities, just like last spring. This also applies to individual sports facilities/clubs, like tennis or golf. Jogging, walking, etc., are still permitted if the contact requirements are adhered to.

## **What will happen with recreational facilities?**

The following will be prohibited from operating until 14 February 2021:

- swimming and public pools, tanning salons, saunas and hot springs, and similar facilities,
- zoos, amusement parks, indoor playgrounds and similar recreational facilities (indoors and outdoors),
- casinos, gambling halls and similar facilities,
- clubs and similar facilities,
- brothels, places of prostitution and similar facilities,
- excursions via ship, coach, historical trains and similar facilities.

At bookies and betting facilities, only the acceptance of tickets, bets, etc., is permitted. Visitors are prohibited from spending any further time in these facilities (e.g. to follow the games and events to which the bets pertain).

## **Are events and gatherings still allowed?**

Events and gatherings not covered by the special regulations of the Coronavirus Protection Ordinance are prohibited until 14 February 2021.

The following, among others, are permitted pending special requirements for each case:

- assemblies pursuant to the Public Meetings Act (e.g. demonstrations)
- events that serve to provide basic services to the population, uphold public safety and order, or provide public services and necessities (e.g. party assemblies to determine electoral district candidates, blood donations, etc.), or which cannot be postponed until after 14 February 2021 for legal or objective reasons

- meetings of legally appointed bodies, companies, parties, associations or homeowners' associations that cannot be held digitally
- funerals
- civil weddings
- religious services.

## **What regulations apply to religious services and other religious gatherings?**

Churches and congregations must decide the extent to which gatherings for religious purposes can be held in person based on the local pandemic conditions, and notify the respective authorities of the jurisdiction.

The churches and congregations shall ensure adherence to the minimum distance requirement, limit the number of participants, implement a sign-in requirement for such gatherings where visitor numbers that could fill the facility's capacity are expected, obligate participants to wear a medical mask (surgical masks or masks that meet the standards KN95/N95 or FFP2), including while seated, record visitors' contact information, and abstain from communal singing.

The regulations for religious services and other religious gatherings, to be compiled by the churches and congregations as per § 1 para. 3 der Coronavirus Protection Ordinance, must be submitted to:

- the State Chancellery of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia by churches and other governing bodies of congregations. **ONLY CHURCHES AND OTHER GOVERNING BODIES OF CONGREGATIONS** may send an e-mail to: [Referat I B3@stk.nrw.de](mailto:Referat_I_B3@stk.nrw.de).
- the respective municipality by congregations that do not belong to a church or other governing body.

Congregations that belong to a church or governing body are obligated to coordinate their safety concepts within the respective church or governing body.

## **Do you have questions about the Coronavirus Protection Ordinance?**

Send an e-mail to [corona@nrw.de](mailto:corona@nrw.de).