



Emergency Travel Order – Frequently Ask Questions

Overview

When does the Order go into effect?

This updated Order goes into effect on Friday, January 15, 2021 at 12:01AM.

Where does the Order apply?

The Order applies to individuals arriving in the City of Chicago, while they are in the city. The city limits are defined in this [interactive map](#).

How will states be designated under the Order?

- A state is designated Yellow if it has a case rate lower than 15 new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents, per day, over a 7-day rolling average.
- A state is designated Orange if it has a case rate of 15 or more new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents, per day, over a 7-day rolling average.

Will the list of Yellow and Orange states change? When will it change?

The list of states will be amended every other Tuesday, with the Order effective for those states the following Friday (three days later).

What if I live outside Chicago but work in the city?

Individuals who live outside Chicago but regularly commute into Chicago for work can continue to do so as usual if they have not traveled to a high incidence state. If they have traveled to an Orange list state, they are subject to the “essential worker” conditions and requirements for Chicago residents set forth in this FAQ in order to not have to quarantine or receive a negative test result within 72 hours prior to arrival in Chicago.

How long is the Order in effect?

The Order will be in effect until further notice, and any changes will be based on applicable public health guidance.

What happens if I violate the Order?

Individuals found in violation of the Order are subject to fines of \$100 - \$500 per day, up to \$7,000.

How will travelers be notified?

The Order will be communicated through messaging on highways, at airports and train stations, on the City’s website, and through social media. Hotels and short-term rentals will be asked to communicate the Order to guests.

Are neighboring states treated differently?

Given the volatility of the daily data reports and the disruption that adding a neighboring state to the travel ordinance causes, neighboring states will be reviewed on a case by case basis.



What if I live outside Chicago but work in the city?

Individuals who live outside Chicago but regularly commute into Chicago for work can continue to do so as usual if they have not traveled to a high incidence state. If they have traveled to an Orange list state, they are subject to the “essential worker” conditions and requirements for Chicago residents set forth in this FAQ in order to not have to quarantine or receive a negative test within 72 hours prior to arrival in Chicago.

Travel

I am returning from international travel. What should I do?

The City of Chicago follows the [Illinois Department of Public Health guidance](#) for international travel.

I am visiting Chicago from another country. What should I do?

The City of Chicago follows the [Illinois Department of Public Health guidance](#) for international travel.

What if I arrive in Chicago before the effective date of the Order?

The Order impacts individuals who arrive in Chicago on or after the effective date of January 15.

What if I came from a state that was later moved to the Yellow list?

Once the state is moved to the Yellow list (which would be announced on a Tuesday) you can end your quarantine, effective immediately. Additionally, there are no longer any testing requirements for those arriving in Chicago from that state, effective immediately. All individuals are still expected to follow the latest [public health guidance](#) for Chicago while in the city.

What if I came from a state that was later moved to the Orange list?

If a state moves from the Yellow list to the Orange list (which would be announced on a Tuesday) that state will officially be added to the Order effective Friday, 12:01AM of that week. If you arrive in Chicago before that date/time, you have no quarantine or testing requirements. If you arrive after that date/time, you must either quarantine for 10-days or receive a negative test result no longer than 72 hours prior to arrival in Chicago.

Are there travel restrictions within Illinois?

There are no travel restrictions within Illinois. However, non-essential travel to the areas of high incidence is discouraged. Areas of high incidence are determined by IDPH and can be [found here](#). If essential travel is needed to these areas, follow the prevention techniques such as using a face covering, frequent hand washing/sanitization, and maintaining social distancing. If you feel sick, you should refrain from all travel and stay at home, unless seeking medical treatment.

What if I had a connecting flight through one of the orange states but did not stay there?

The Order does not apply to any individual passing through orange states for less than 24 hours in the course of travel.

What if I drove through one of the orange states but did not stay there?

The Order does not apply to any individual passing through orange states for less than 24 hours in the course of travel.



What if I traveled to a state but was there for less than 24 hours?

If your final destination is a state on the orange list, then you must follow the Order, even if you are in that state for less than 24 hours. The Order does not apply if you are traveling **through** an orange state and are in the state for less than 24 hours.

What if I was in an Orange list state and then traveled to a Yellow state before arriving in Chicago?

If you were in an Orange list state, unless you are traveling through, you must follow the Order, even if you spent time in a yellow state for a period after being in the designated state and before arriving in Chicago.

What if I have to travel for my job?

Travelers coming to Chicago for non-essential business and residents returning to Chicago from an orange state must adhere to the Order, subject to the limited exemptions outlined in the 'Exemptions tab'.

I already had my flight booked/trip planned. Do I still have to follow the Order?

Yes, all travelers arriving on or after the effective date of January 15, 2021, are required to follow the Order, subject to the limited exemptions outlined in the 'Exemptions tab'.

What if I came from one of the designated states and am staying in Chicago less than 10 days?

If you are traveling from an Orange list state and choose to not do a pre-arrival test, you must quarantine for a period of 10 days or the duration of your presence in Chicago, whichever is shorter.

What if I am flying into a Chicago airport or riding a train to a Chicago station, but not staying in the city?

The Order does not apply to individuals changing planes at a Chicago airport, changing trains at a Chicago station, or traveling directly to a suburban municipality or otherwise out of the city limits. However, all individuals are expected to follow the latest [public health guidance](#) for Chicago while in the city, including in the airport terminals and railroad stations. This includes the mandate that individuals over the age of 2 wear masks or face coverings at all times.

I am dropping off / picking up a passenger from a Chicago airport or Chicago train station. Do I need to quarantine or have a pre-arrival test?

The Order does not apply to individuals picking up or dropping off at Chicago airports, Chicago train station, or traveling directly to a suburban municipality or otherwise out of the city limits. However, all individuals are expected to follow the latest [public health guidance](#) for Chicago while in the city, including in the airport terminals and railroad stations. This includes the mandate that individuals over the age of 2 wear masks or face coverings at all times.

My family/friends are coming from an orange state and are staying with me. Do I have to follow the Order?

No. Household members who did not travel from an orange state are not required to quarantine or receive a negative COVID-19 test.

I am returning from an orange state. Can I go to work or is that a violation of the Order?

All travelers returning to Chicago from the designated states must follow the Order unless deemed an essential worker and subject to the limited exemptions outlined in the 'Exemptions tab'.



What are employer responsibilities if employees travel to one of the high-risk states for non-work-related travel?

Any employer with an employee subject to the Order because the employee departed the state on or after January 15, 2021 for non-work-related travel, and subject themselves to quarantine upon return, should consult the City's Anti-Retaliation Ordinance, Paid Sick Leave Ordinance, and the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) in determining the appropriate response. If the employer is covered under the FFCRA and if the employee is unable to work or telework due to one of the specified COVID-related reasons in the FFCRA, the employee is likely eligible for up to two weeks of paid leave under the [FFCRA](#).

Does this Order apply to holiday travel?

Yes, the Order applies to all travel unless outlined in the “exemptions” tab.

Pre-arrival testing

Where can I get tested?

Travelers from orange states who choose the pre-arrival testing option should receive a COVID-19 test **prior to arrival in Chicago**. Contact the local health department to learn more about testing options in each state.

When do I need to get a test?

If you are traveling to or from an orange list state, travelers must receive a negative test result no longer than **72 hours prior to arrival in Chicago**. If you are traveling to a Yellow list state, you do not need to have a test or quarantine.

I was in an orange state for fewer than 72 hours. Can I take my test before I leave Chicago?

If you are in an orange state for fewer than 72 hours, you still must take a test within 72 hours of returning to Chicago or complete a 10-day quarantine upon your return. **The test cannot be taken in Chicago prior to your travel**. If you arrive in Chicago and are still waiting for the test result, you must quarantine until you receive it.

I haven't received my test results. What should I do?

Turnaround time for COVID-19 test results varies across the country. Research testing turnaround timelines prior to travel. If you arrive in Chicago and are still waiting for results, you must quarantine until you receive your results.

If I test negative, do I still have to quarantine?

If you are traveling from an orange list state and receive a pre-arrival negative test result no longer than 72 hours prior to arrival in Chicago, you do not need to quarantine.

Where do I submit my test information?

Testing information does not need to be submitted, but please keep a copy of your results with you while in Chicago.

What if I test positive?



If you receive a positive test for COVID-19, you most likely DO currently have an active COVID-19 infection and can give the virus to others. Stay home and follow [CDPH guidance](#) on steps to protect yourself and others. Do not travel unless seeking medical care.

What if I traveled to an orange list state and received a negative test result?

If you test negative for COVID-19, you most likely DO NOT currently have an active COVID-19 infection and no longer need to quarantine. However, you must continue to wear a mask when in public settings and practice social distancing. You should keep monitoring symptoms and follow [CDPH guidance](#) on steps to protect yourself and others.

What if I cannot get an appointment for a test before I arrive in Chicago?

If you cannot take a test prior to arrival, you have the option to take a post-arrival test in Chicago under two conditions:

1. You quarantine in Chicago until you receive a negative test result
2. The test must come from a **private test provider** (you cannot use a CDPH community-based testing site to fulfill the travel order requirement due to limited testing capacity at these locations)

If you cannot be tested for COVID-19 prior to arriving in Chicago and do not take a post-arrival test, you must quarantine for 10 days (or the duration of your stay, whichever is shorter).

What type of test do I need to get?

If you are traveling to or from an orange list state, your pre-arrival test must be a diagnostic test. An antibody test does not qualify.

Quarantine

What does it mean to quarantine?

Quarantine helps prevent the spread of disease before a person knows they are sick, including if a traveler has been infected with the virus but does not have symptoms. Under this Order, quarantine means staying at a single designated home or dwelling for 10 days before doing any activities outside of the home or dwelling. People in quarantine should separate themselves from others as much as possible and check themselves for symptoms. Additional requirements under quarantine include:

- The individual must not be in public or otherwise leave the dwelling that they have identified as suitable for their quarantine, unless seeking medical care.
- If seeking medical care or testing, or when traveling to or from the airport, train station, or bus station (if applicable), a face covering must be worn, and public transportation must not be used.
- Food and other needed supplies must be delivered to the individual's dwelling; the individual may not leave the premises to acquire supplies.
- The traveling individual or family group should be situated in separate quarters with a separate bedroom and, if possible, separate bathroom facility from non-traveling household members.
- The individual must self-monitor for symptoms potentially consistent with COVID-19. If any symptoms develop, the individual may leave the dwelling to receive testing for COVID-19 but then must return to complete the 10-day quarantine while isolating from other household members, regardless of the test result.



I don't have any symptoms. Do I still have to follow the Order?

Yes. All travelers returning to Chicago from the designated states must follow the Order unless deemed an essential worker and subject to the limited exemptions outlined in the 'Exemptions tab'.

Exemptions

Are there any exemptions to the Order?

For purposes of the Order and this FAQ, "essential workers" are not subject to the mandatory self-quarantine if their travel is for work purposes under the following circumstances:

(a) if a non-resident of Chicago, is traveling from a designated state to Chicago for the primary purpose of carrying out their primary work in Chicago, and who needs to be physically present in Chicago in order to carry out that primary work, with identification issued by their employer, or

(b) if a resident of Chicago, is returning from a designated state, and was in the designated state for the primary purpose of carrying out their primary work in that state, and who needed to be physically present in that state in order to carry out that primary work, with identification issued by their employer.

An essential worker whose travel is for non-work purposes is subject to the Order and is not covered by this exception.

An "essential worker" is a person who works in [critical infrastructure as designated by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency](#). "Essential worker" includes any state, local, and federal officials and employees traveling in their official capacities on government business, including military service.

Essential workers traveling for work purposes are subject to the following requirements:

- Essential workers should avoid any non-essential interactions until the quarantine period has ended. They must limit their activities to work-related activities and functions that directly support their work-related activities and avoid public spaces as much as possible.
- Essential workers should monitor temperature and signs of symptoms, wear a face covering when in public, maintain social distance, and clean and disinfect workspaces.
- Essential workers are required, to the extent possible, to avoid extended periods in public, contact with strangers, and large congregate settings.

Exceptions to the Order for personal travel will be permitted for travel for medical care and parental shared custody. The Commissioner of Health may additionally grant an exemption based upon an organization's or business' testing and other control policies or in extraordinary circumstances, which warrant an exception from mandatory quarantine, subject to the terms and conditions applied to essential workers or terms and conditions otherwise imposed by the Commissioner in the interest of public health.

Is there an exemption for students who commute for school?

Students who commute regularly to Chicago for school from designated states are exempted from the Order, but should follow the same guidance as essential workers traveling for work purposes:



- Avoid any non-essential interactions. Limit activities to school-related activities and functions and avoid public spaces as much as possible.
- Monitor temperature and signs of symptoms, wear a face covering when in public, maintain social distance, and clean and disinfect school spaces.
- Avoid extended periods in public, contact with strangers, and large congregate settings.

What if I live outside Chicago but work in the city?

Individuals who live in an orange list state but regularly commute to Chicago for work can continue to do so, but should monitor their temperature and signs of symptoms, wear a face covering when in public, maintain social distancing and clean and disinfect workspaces. If commuting individuals (including essential workers) have travel to an orange list state for personal travel, they must follow the Order. If an essential worker commuter travels to a high-risk state for work, they are exempt from the Order, but should monitor their temperature and signs of symptoms, wear a face covering when in public, maintain social distancing and clean and disinfect workspaces.

What if I live in Chicago but work in an orange list state?

Individuals who live in Chicago but regularly commute to an orange list state can continue to do so, but should monitor their temperature and signs of symptoms, wear a face covering when in public, maintain social distancing and clean and disinfect workspaces. If commuting individuals (including essential workers) have traveled to an orange list state other than their work state for personal travel, they must follow the Order. If an essential worker commuter travels to a high-risk state for work, they are exempt from the Order, but should monitor their temperature and signs of symptoms, wear a face covering when in public, maintain social distancing and clean and disinfect workspaces.

What if I had a positive COVID-19 test within 90 days?

If you have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 90 days, you are exempt from the Travel Order as long as you have completed your 10-day isolation (from start of symptoms and/or positive test), have a documented positive test, and remain asymptomatic during your travel.

Does my child need to have a negative COVID-19 test?

Children under the age of 18 are exempt from the Order if they traveled with others who have received a negative pre-arrival COVID-19 test. Children who travel alone are required to follow the Order for pre-arrival testing or quarantine.

College students and parents

Is there an exemption for students who commute for school?

Students who commute regularly to Chicago for school from designated states are exempted from the Order, but should follow the same guidance as essential workers traveling for work purposes:

- Avoid any non-essential interactions. Limit activities to school-related activities and functions and avoid public spaces as much as possible.
- Monitor temperature and signs of symptoms, wear a face covering when in public, maintain social distance, and clean and disinfect school spaces.
- Avoid extended periods in public, contact with strangers, and large congregate settings.

What if I live in an orange state and am arriving for the semester at a college or university in Chicago?



Students are expected to follow the Order and should ask their school for guidance. CDPH is working with institutions of higher education to provide various acceptable options.

What if I live in an orange state and am visiting or accompanying a student to their college in Chicago?
Those accompanying students to college from high-incidence states should follow the same guidelines as anyone else traveling inbound to Chicago from orange states under the new order.

What if I am a Chicago resident dropping a student off at a college in an orange state?
Individuals from Chicago who accompany students to college to high-incidence states should follow the same guidelines as anyone else traveling to orange states under the new order.