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Russian Mayor Urges Kicking Maskless Passengers Off Public Transit

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Face masks are required on public transportation in many Russian cities. **Mikhail Metzel / TASS**

Public transport passengers "can and should" kick out fellow passengers who don't wear masks, the mayor of Russia's fourth-largest city of Yekaterinburg said Tuesday.

The Sverdlovsk region, where Yekaterinburg is the administrative center, is Russia's fifth most-affected federal subject by the coronavirus pandemic. It has confirmed a total of 33,425 Covid-19 cases and 718 deaths since the start of the outbreak.

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Yekaterinburg Mayor Alexander Vysokinsky said in an interview with the city's e1.ru news website that passengers "can and should" kick off fellow riders who aren't wearing masks to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

"We'll have to reinstate restrictions if we don't follow simple rules and [infections] increase,"

Vysokinsky said.

His spokesman later accused the media of taking the mayor's words out of context, saying Vysokinsky "asked everyone to behave responsibly."

E1.ru reported Wednesday that passengers' resistance to wearing masks when boarding buses has severely delayed schedules and in several cases led to mass altercations. Similar standoffs have been reported in Moscow, where authorities stepped up the enforcement of mask and glove mandates in the metro and on buses.

Meanwhile, reports citing unnamed medical sources said rising numbers of Covid-19 cases have brought Yekaterinburg's hospitals to full capacity.

Russia has seen a record-breaking surge in Covid-19 infections and deaths in recent weeks but has opted toward targeted restrictions instead of reintroducing strict lockdown measures.

Russia's official number of Covid-19 cases stands at more than 1.4 million, the fourth-highest in the world, with daily figures rising by 14,000 to 16,000 in the past week.

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