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Far East City of Blagoveshchensk Orders Mask Mandate as Flu Cases Rise

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Sophia Sandurskaya / Moskva News Agency

Authorities in the Far East city of Blagoveshchensk, located near the Chinese border, said Wednesday that they would impose a two-week mask mandate amid a sharp uptick in respiratory illness cases in the area.

The Amur region government announced that a citywide mask mandate will take effect on Thursday and remain in place until Dec. 19. All large events involving children have also been canceled during that same period.

"These restrictions will help minimize contact between children and prevent mass outbreaks," the regional government said in a statement.

Authorities stated that businesses are required to have their employees wear masks, ensure proper ventilation, install disinfecting air purifiers and send home anyone showing signs of respiratory illness.

The mask mandate was introduced after health authorities on Monday reported a 74% week-on-week surge in flu cases in the Amur region. Federal officials say the increase is consistent with the annual winter rise in respiratory viral infections, including common flu strains.

Mask mandates were imposed worldwide during the Covid-19 pandemic. Authorities in some Russian regions still cite pandemic-era restrictions when banning protests and other public activities.

On Wednesday, Valery Fadeyev, head of Russia's presidential human rights council, called the continued use of pandemic-era restrictions "comical."

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