

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way people live and work. Across the world, people have been asked to stay home and cancel nonessential travel. Fewer people are commuting and taking public transport. Many cities have witnessed emptier streets, but essential workers, delivery workers, and emergency responders must still use the roads.

However, these empty roads have also led to an increase in speeding (see examples from [Delhi](#) and [Bogotá](#)). With emergency response and health care systems focused on the pandemic, there is less capacity to respond to road crashes and treat victims. At the same time, many people now travel on foot or by bicycle for essential trips or exercise, making them more vulnerable in case of a crash with a vehicle. It is critical to remind road users of the importance of driving safely and following local government guidance on travel and transit—which may mean avoiding going out unless it is essential.



Ensure that road safety messages acknowledge the local COVID-19 situation. See this example from the [Global Road Safety Partnership](#), which features an empty New York City street while stay at home orders are in place.

Improving road safety supports essential workers and public health systems as they focus on COVID-19 response. Keep road safety a part of the conversation with these recommendations.

Key Messages

Use these messages to frame communication with the public and the media on the topic of road safety during COVID-19.

- Improving road safety can lessen the burden on health care systems—a critical need right now. Fewer crashes mean emergency response systems can focus on caring for people with COVID-19.
- Following the rules of the road saves lives. Do it for our health care workers. It's important now more than ever to keep the roads safe for essential workers who are saving lives.
- Protect essential workers who are saving lives—keep them safe on their commute. Drive only if you have to, and follow the rules of the road.
- Empty streets are not safer streets when you speed. Slow down, drive safely.
- We thank our food delivery drivers for keeping us fed during COVID-19. Be safe when you are on the roads! Wear your helmet/seat-belt/[insert relevant desired behavior].
- Our health care workers are saving lives. Don't end their lives because of a road crash, [insert relevant desired behavior].
- Stay home except for essentials. Then, [insert relevant desired behavior].

Communicating About Road Safety During COVID-19

Follow These Dos And Don'ts When Communicating About Road Safety During COVID-19:

Dos

- When crafting messages, think about how road use has changed since COVID-19 and who you are appealing to.
- Identify changes in behaviors due to COVID-19 (e.g. speeding due to emptier roads).
- Use the latest data correctly. For example, Streets Blog, a news site focused on road use and road safety, published [an article](#) highlighting that while the overall *total* number of crashes is down in some locations, the *rate* of crashes is increasing during COVID-19 because of an increase in reckless driving.
- Show appreciation for essential workers and remind them to follow road safety measures in their daily commute.
- Reinforce local road safety laws as they relate to COVID-19 messaging. For example, if stay-at-home orders are in place, encourage drivers to follow posted speed limits:
 - “If you must leave home for essential items, follow the speed limits.”
- Encourage infrastructure that allows people to follow physical distancing guidelines, and highlight the long-term benefits of improved infrastructure. For example:
 - Adding bike lanes, widening sidewalks, or closing some streets to cars allows people to remain at least 2 meters away from others when they must leave home, and ultimately saves lives.
- Engage media to help share key road safety messages that will help the local effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by reinforcing local regulations and motivating audiences to practice safe behaviors when they must leave home.

Don'ts

- Messages should not encourage people to leave their homes or get in their vehicles. *Instead, actively encourage stay-at-home messaging.*
- Messages should not make reference to or show crowds of people or show any activities that would violate current local mandates.
- Do not expect much enforcement on the roads while governments focus on preventing the spread of COVID-19. Enforcement won't be top priority.
- Do not compare the importance of road safety to the importance of COVID-19 measures. Both traffic crashes and COVID-19 are deadly—it's not an either-or situation.

More info at

[PreventEpidemics.org](https://www.PreventEpidemics.org)
[ResolveToSaveLives.org](https://www.ResolveToSaveLives.org)
[VitalStrategies.org](https://www.VitalStrategies.org)

About Us

Vital Strategies is a global public health organization working in 70+ countries to strengthen public health systems. Resolve to Save Lives, an initiative of Vital Strategies, aims to prevent 100 million deaths from cardiovascular disease and prevent epidemics. Through its Prevent Epidemics program, Resolve to Save Lives is supporting countries throughout Africa and beyond to respond to COVID-19.



USA Road PSA

The strongest message at this time is to follow your government's advice, stay at home, and if you need to go out, walk, drive, or ride carefully: use a seat-belt or helmet, reduce your speed, don't drink and drive, and stay off your mobile phone. Be responsible for your own sake and the sake of everyone else.



The Malaysian Prime Minister shared this message thanking food delivery riders for their service during COVID-19, and urging them to ride safely. This message is two-pronged: it encourages road safety behavior while reducing stigma to essential food delivery workers. For added effectiveness: Be specific. If helmet wearing (or speeding) is an issue, include this into the safety message with a few words. Graphically, enhance the key call to action, so it can be easily seen.