Mask blitz on trains, trams

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Transport reporter

Mask-wearing on Melbourne's public transport network will be more heavily enforced as police prepare to embark on a two-week blitz.

Nearly half of commuters are wearing masks incorrectly or not at all on Melbourne's trains and trams, as police prepare to bolster their presence on the network, with roving patrols to start today.

Government data shows 49 per cent of commuters either did not wear a mask or wore it incorrectly on trains. This was the same for 46 per cent of commuters on trams.

Compliance rates plummeted in April compared with March, when 32 per cent of commuters dodged mask rules on trains and 24 per cent of commuters on trams.

Officers will first adopt what police describe as an "educative approach" by offering a mask to those not wearing one, but people who reject it without a valid reason will be liable for a $200 fine.

Superintendent Andrew Humberstone said police were responding to concerns from people within the community about diminishing mask compliance on public transport.

"As part of these patrols, police will not only be engaging with those not wearing a mask without a valid reason and offering them a face covering, but also providing reassurance to the rest of the travelling public that a rule designed to protect everyone's health and safety is still being respected," he said.

Superintendent Humberstone acknowledged it was easy for commuters to forget their masks, as face coverings are no longer required to be worn as extensively as before.

Public Transport Minister Ben Carroll said: "We need every single Victorian to play their part in protecting the precious gains we've made against the virus, to keep our state safe and open."