

Plastic shields protect China's ride-hailing drivers against virus

February 25 2020

At a Beijing "disinfection station", a driver for a ride-hailing company is installing a plastic shield between the front and rear seats of his car to reassure passengers during the deadly coronavirus outbreak.

Zhao Haijun, a Didi Chuxing driver, says the shield helps isolate him from passengers, and prevents the virus being spread through droplets in the air.

"Now, I don't chat with the passengers," said Zhao. "In an extraordinary period, it's better to be careful."

The car-hailing giant has nine disinfection stations in the capital, each of which can sterilise around 400 vehicles a day.

In addition, there are also 46 plastic shield installation points around the city handling up to 100 cars each per day.

China has implemented unprecedented measures to try and contain the spread of the virus—which has killed more than 2,600 people in the mainland—including locking down tens of millions of people in the city's epicentre, Hubei province.

There have also been tight restrictions on transport.

Across the country, [residential buildings](#), offices and shopping centres are regularly spraying disinfectant, and checking the temperature of

visitors.

In Beijing, all [taxi drivers](#) have to wear [face masks](#), must direct customers to sit in the rear, and disinfect their cars twice a day.

But Didi—which says it has 30 million [drivers](#) and more than 550 million users across its various services—is hoping to reassure its customers with extra measures.

Wang Weijia, driver service manager at Didi Beijing, told AFP that given the current mood even a sneeze "could cause tension between the driver and the [passenger](#)".

Staff in protective suits spray medical disinfectant work inside and outside, while handles, pedals and steering wheels are doused in cleaning fluid.

After attaching the dividing shield, Didi staff also post a health reminder with a cartoon of a car with a large red heart next to it.

"Safety means protection, and love can cross the plastic cover," the notice reads.

As well as visiting the disinfection stations, Zhao says he also takes his own measures.

"When the passengers get out, I open the window to ventilate, and I disinfect before I receive a new order," he said.

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Citation: Plastic shields protect China's ride-hailing drivers against virus (2020, February 25) retrieved 5 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-02-plastic-shields-china-ride-hailing-drivers.html>

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