

Virus Toll Grows In New Jersey

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Highlight: Hospitals and health care workers are scrambling to keep up with the surge in cases.

Body

Hospitals and health care workers are scrambling to keep up with the surge in cases.

[This briefing has ended. For the latest updates on the coronavirus outbreak in the New York area, read Monday's live coverage.]

The outbreak is now enveloping New Jersey.

Twelve doctors at her hospital and the chief executive were sickened with the coronavirus. A colleague had died. Patients as young as 19 were being placed on ventilators.

But Michele Acito, the director of nursing at Holy Name Medical Center, in the hardest-hit town in New Jersey's hardest-hit county, felt like she was holding up.

Then her mother-in-law, sister-in-law and brother-in-law arrived, gasping for air.

The disease that has crippled New York City is now enveloping New Jersey's densely packed cities and suburbs. The state's governor said on Friday that New Jersey was about a week behind New York, where scenes of panicked doctors have gripped the nation.

On Sunday afternoon, state officials announced that the death toll in New Jersey had risen to 917, up from 846 the day before.

Phil Murphy, the governor of New Jersey, the second hardest hit state in the country behind neighboring New York, said that an additional 3,000 people tested positive for the virus.

The counties with the most fatalities are Bergen, the state's most populated county, and neighboring Essex. Bergen has 189 fatalities; Essex County has 172, as of Sunday afternoon.

Hospitals in the state are scrambling to convert cafeterias and pediatric wings into intensive care units. Ventilators are running low. One in three nursing homes has at least one resident with the virus.

At Holy Name in Teaneck, just across the Hudson River from Manhattan, two doctors are among the 150 patients being treated for the virus.

The ages of the 41 people on ventilators one day last week ranged from 19 to 90.

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Twenty patients died in 72 hours.

One of them was Edna Acito, Ms. Acito's mother-in-law.

Death toll in N.Y. climbs to 4,159 as confirmed cases top 122,031.

New York State has now topped 4,000 deaths from the coronavirus, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo said on Sunday. But the governor pointed to early indications that the crisis could be plateauing, though he cautioned against jumping to any conclusions.

The number of deaths in the state has reached 4,159, Mr. Cuomo said. But, notably, there were slightly fewer fatalities on Saturday than on Friday.

"You could argue that you're seeing a slight plateauing in the data, which obviously would be good news," Mr. Cuomo said at his daily briefing in Albany. But he noted that it was too soon to say whether the changes in the numbers were indicative of a trend.

Mr. Cuomo also said he would seek to shift patients from overloaded hospitals to other facilities with lighter workloads. Supplies like gowns and masks were being shifted among hospitals as well, he said.

"I can't say to a hospital, 'I will send you all the supplies you need, I will send you all the ventilators you need,'" he said. "We don't have them. It's not an exercise. It's not a drill. It's just a statement of reality. You're going to have to shift and deploy resources to different locations based on the need of that location."

Responding to concerns about whether parts of upstate New York would be left vulnerable if ventilators were moved downstate, Mr. Cuomo said no single area of the state could handle the crisis by itself.

"I don't see any other operational model," he said. "You cannot handle this without your brothers and sisters."

Here are the latest statistics from Mr. Cuomo's briefing:

- Deaths in New York State: 4,159, up from 3,565 on Saturday morning.
- Confirmed cases: 122,031, up from 113,704. In New York City, 67,551, up from 63,306.
- Hospitalized in New York State: 16,479, up from 15,905.
- In intensive care: 4,376, up from 4,126.

De Blasio says New York City has enough medical supplies until Tuesday or Wednesday.

New York City has enough critical medical supplies to last "a few more days," Mayor Bill de Blasio said in a news conference on Sunday.

But, he cautioned that the city was not yet out of the woods, and that local hospitals still needed n95 masks, gloves, and gowns.

"There is still real help we will need to get through the week," said Mr. de Blasio, adding, "We believe we can get to Tuesday or Wednesday with the supply we have."

The entire city currently has 135 ventilators in reserve and needs between 1,000 and 1,500 more to get through next week, Mr. de Blasio said.

Mr. de Blasio also said that 291 military medical personnel were arriving to work in the city's public hospitals, but that the city still needed more aid.

"That's a very good start," the mayor said. "But I want to say to everyone in Washington, that's a start. It's nowhere near what I requested for our public hospitals."

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Mr. de Blasio said he'd asked for 1,450 military medical personnel, and would be "going to go back to the president, to F.E.M.A. to the Department of Defense and let them know we need a lot more help for our public hospitals."

Responding to questions about sighting of him walking with his wife without a face mask in Prospect Park, the mayor said that he had been wearing a scarf as a face covering and adhering to the guidance given last week to all New Yorkers.

"If you are distant from everyone, there's no one near you, there is not a specific need," he said. "If you think you're going to be near people, you bring it up and cover your face. That is what I did."

He added: "You don't have to wear it every minute."

A Rikers inmate has died of complications from the virus.

Weeks after the coronavirus was first detected in Rikers Island, the first inmate at the jail complex died on Sunday from complications related to the virus, according to two people with knowledge of the matter.

The inmate, a 53-year-old, had been on Rikers Island since Feb. 28 until he was transported to a hospital on March 26, according to an official who spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of retribution.

The Department of Correction did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The death of the inmate came as the number of detainees and correction staff with the virus continued to climb. On Sunday, the department said 273 inmates, 321 correction staff and 53 health workers had tested positive for coronavirus. Four correction staff members have died from the virus.

Public officials have moved to release hundreds of inmates in recent weeks in an effort to reduce the spread of the virus behind bars. Public defenders and jail health officials have called for more releases.

The virus has also begun to wreak havoc in prisons throughout New York State, killing a total of two other inmates, a civilian employee and a parolee, according to the Department of Correction and Community Supervision.

A Bronx Zoo tiger tests positive with the coronavirus.

A tiger at the Bronx zoo has been confirmed to be infected with Covid-19, in what is believed to be a case of what one official called "human-to-cat transmission."

"This is the first instance of a tiger being infected with Covid-19," according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which noted that although only one tiger was tested, the virus appeared to have infected other animals as well.

"Several lions and tigers at the zoo showed symptoms of respiratory illness," according to a statement by the Agriculture Department.

Public health officials believe that the large cats caught the virus from a zoo employee. The tiger appeared visibly sick by March 27.

In a statement, the agriculture department suggested that those infected with the virus should, "out of an abundance of caution," avoid contact with their pets and other animals.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said that it is "aware of a very small number of pets outside the United States reported to be infected."

The C.D.C. has said that it does not have evidence that pets can spread the coronavirus.

The sick tigers include: Nadia, a 4-year old female Malayan tiger, and her sister, Azul, as well as two Amur tigers. They live in the zoo's Tiger Mountain exhibit.

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While the zookeepers generally keep a barrier between them and the cats, they do get within a few feet of the animals. "During the course of feeding and doing enrichment they will come within feet of them, but on opposite sides of the barrier," said Dr. Paul Calle, chief veterinarian at the Bronx Zoo.

The New England Patriots gift New York 300,000 face masks.

A truck bearing the New England Patriots logo delivered hundreds of thousands of much-needed masks to a makeshift hospital in New York City's midtown Manhattan on Friday.

The 300,000 N95 masks arrived at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center at a crucial moment, as the city experienced perhaps its worst day in the crisis, reporting 305 new deaths on Friday alone. Health workers across the city and state have complained of a shortage of crucial supplies they need to stay safe and treat patients, with some organizing protests at their hospitals.

"In normal times, the New England Patriots are New York's rivals. But today, they acted as friends, delivering 300,000 much-needed masks to our front line health care workers," Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo said in a release.

The team had received a shipment of over 1 million face masks from China earlier in the week after the Massachusetts governor and the team's owner teamed up to buy the supplies. The rest will go to hospitals in Massachusetts.

The store signs of a closing New York.

All along the empty streets of Manhattan, the messages reach out from the newly darkened storefronts. The notes express empathy, resolve, concern, even humor — a reflection of New York's spirit.

After Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo ordered all nonessential businesses in New York to close last month, many storefronts had messages for their customers. We looked at some of those voices in waiting around the city.

Chinese-Americans, while facing racist attacks, are uniting to aid hospitals.

Dr. Peter Lee, an emergency room doctor from Montville, N.J., was fighting the coronavirus on multiple fronts.

At work, he was dodging exposure. At home, he worried about infecting his pregnant wife and young daughters. And everyday, he was navigating a new bias against Chinese-Americans.

And on March 20, he posted on WeChat, the social media app popular with many Chinese-Americans. He asked for donations of personal protective equipment for himself and his colleagues.

The result: Members of the Millburn Short Hills Chinese Association raised more than \$50,000 and obtained 10,000 masks, gowns and other equipment from a Chinese company with a warehouse in Queens.

That was just one example of small groups from the Chinese-American community uniting to fight the pandemic in this country even as they face racist remarks and physical attacks.

"Comments like calling this 'the Chinese virus' have ramifications for someone like me," said Dr. Lee, 34. "They fuel a certain prejudice against my kind."

Using mostly WeChat, Chinese-Americans are creating vast networks and rallying contacts here and in China to procure supplies for doctors and nurses in need.

The Long Island Chinese American Association was delivering more than 10,000 masks to three hospitals and nearly 8,000 surgical masks to the Visiting Nursing Service of New York.

The Coalition of Asian-Americans in Private Practice, a New York group, has raised close to \$250,000 since January and expects to get 80,000 N95 masks to hospitals this month.

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A group of Chinese-American professors at Rutgers University raised \$12,000 and collected more than 4,000 masks to support a hospital in New Brunswick, N.J.

New York's old software can't handle the thousands of newly unemployed.

Mohammed Saiful Islam got a taste of how antiquated the technology that runs New York State's unemployment-insurance system is when he had to go to a Staples store in the middle of a pandemic to fax his pay stubs to Albany.

Mr. Islam, a Lyft driver who lives in Queens and has been idled by the outbreak, is among more than 450,000 New Yorkers who have tried, often in vain, to apply for unemployment benefits in the past three weeks.

As he and many others discovered, the state's archaic systems were woefully unprepared for the deluge of claims. In Mr. Islam's case, he said it took him four days to reach someone who could explain what he had to do to complete the application process.

State officials admitted as recently as last summer that there were problems with the technology used for such applications, describing New York's unemployment-insurance systems as relics from the heyday of mainframe computers.

The software programs that run the systems were "written in the 1970s and 1980s and remain constrained by the technology of that era," officials wrote while seeking bids as part of a planned modernization project.

In March, when hundreds of thousands of workers whose jobs had suddenly evaporated started trying to log onto the Labor Department website or call its phone lines, the systems failed.

Would-be applicants' frustration grew as their computer screens froze repeatedly and their calls went unanswered for days. Some attempts to apply for benefits yielded a pop-up message that suggested using Netscape, a browser that effectively no longer exists.

Mr. Islam, who had never applied for jobless benefits in the 35 years since he immigrated from Bangladesh, said he was taken aback to hear that he had to find a fax machine to complete his claim.

But he put on a face mask and gloves and warily trudged off to a Staples store. Late this week, he was still waiting to hear how much he would receive, and when.

Are you unemployed because of the coronavirus outbreak?

More than 800,000 residents the New York region, including New Jersey and Connecticut, have applied for unemployment benefits in the last two weeks as the coronavirus pandemic has brought the economy to a virtual standstill.

If you are an employer or a worker who is unemployed, go here to share your story. A reporter or editor may contact you. Your information will not be published without your consent.

Reporting was contributed by Helene Cooper, Melina Delkic, Thomas Kaplan, Azi Paybarah, Edgar Sandoval, Eric Schmitt, Tracey Tully and Katie Van Syckle.

PHOTO: Michele Acito, center, is the director of nursing at Holy Name Medical Center in Teaneck, N.J. (PHOTOGRAPH BY Jeff Rhode/Holy Name Medical Center FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

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