

New York joins California in locking down against the virus

March 20 2020, by Tim Sullivan and Nicole Winfield



A flier urging customers to remain home hangs at a turnstile as an MTA employee sanitizes surfaces at a subway station with bleach solutions due to COVID-19 concerns, Friday, March 20, 2020, in New York. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo is ordering all workers in non-essential businesses to stay home and banning gatherings statewide. "Only essential businesses can have workers commuting to the job or on the job," Cuomo said of an executive order he will sign Friday. Nonessential gatherings of individuals of any size or for any reason are canceled or postponed. (AP Photo/John Minchillo)

New York state moved to join California on Friday in ordering nearly all residents to stay in their homes, as governors undertook their most sweeping efforts yet to contain the coronavirus and fend off the kind of onslaught of patients that has caused southern Europe to buckle.

"We're going to close the valve, because the rate of increase in the number of cases portends a total overwhelming of our hospital system," New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said as the death toll in the U.S. topped 200, with at least 38 in his state.

Cuomo said that starting Sunday, all workers in nonessential businesses must stay home as much as possible, and all gatherings of any size will be banned in the state of more than 19 million people. He acted after California all but confined its 40 million residents in the biggest lockdown in the nation.

The increasingly drastic measures in the U.S. came as gasping patients filled the wards of hospitals in Spain and Italy, and the global death toll surpassed 10,000, with the virus still multiplying and gaining footholds in new corners of the world.

Italy, the hardest-hit country in Europe, reported 627 new deaths Friday, its biggest day-to-day rise since the outbreak began, and said new cases also shot up. Italy now has seen over 4,000 deaths—more even than China—and 47,000 infections. The soaring numbers came despite a nationwide lockdown.



A grocery clerk wears a protective mask and gloves while serving a customer in the Queen borough of New York, Friday, March 20, 2020. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo is ordering all workers in non-essential businesses to stay home and banning gatherings statewide. "Only essential businesses can have workers commuting to the job or on the job," Cuomo said of an executive order he will sign Friday. Nonessential gatherings of individuals of any size or for any reason are canceled or postponed. (AP Photo/John Minchillo)

The World Health Organization noted the epidemic's dramatic speed.

"It took over three months to reach the first 10,000 confirmed cases and only 12 days to reach the next 100,000," the U.N. health agency said.

Across the U.S., governors and public health officials watched the crisis

in Europe with mounting alarm and warned of critical shortages of ventilators, masks and other protective gear at home.

As promised earlier in the week, President Donald Trump officially invoked emergency wartime authority to try to speed production of such equipment.

But while the government has vowed to fix the botched roll-out of widespread virus testing, laboratories warned of dire shortages of test supplies such as swabs and chemical components.

Countries frantically prepared for a deluge of patients in the coming weeks.



An member of the group 'Pause the System' wears a face mask as she protests in

front of the entrance to Downing Street in London, Friday, March 20, 2020. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. (AP Photo/Frank Augstein)

In Britain, the government asked 65,000 retired nurses and doctors to return to work. A convention center and hotels in Madrid were being turned into field hospitals for nearly 10,000 patients. France's military worked to build a makeshift medical center in the hard-hit town of Mulhouse. The U.S. readied military hospitals for civilian use, and more than 4,000 National Guard members were deployed in 31 states to help distribute food, scrub down surfaces and help in other ways.

Trump also announced the closing of the Mexican border to most travel but not trade. That brings it in line with the restrictions on the Canadian border earlier this week. The income tax filing deadline was also moved from April 15 to July 15.

"We're about to enter into a new way of living here in Los Angeles," Mayor Eric Garcetti said as California went into lockdown, with people told to venture outside only for essential jobs or errands and some exercise. "What we do and how we do it and if we get this right will determine how long this crisis lasts."



People wearing masks, as a precaution against the spread of the new coronavirus, ride an empty train in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Friday, March 20, 2020. Argentina's government has ordered residents to quarantine themselves until the end of the month to help contain the spread of COVID-19. (AP Photo/Natacha Pisarenko)

On Friday morning, the streets of downtown Los Angeles were quiet but not desolate. Residents walked their dogs or jogged, while some homeless people slept. Cars drove along Figueroa Street, but the usual traffic jams were gone.

Scott Sorensen, who was walking his boxer, Chewie, said he is limiting how much attention he pays to the news so that he is not overwhelmed.

"I remember my great-grandmother describing the Depression," said Sorenson, 50. "I'm trying to keep it in focus."

The virus has struck at the very identities of many countries: closing down cafes, restaurants and boulevard life in France, ending la dolce vita in Italy, shutting down England's pubs and the ceremonial changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace, wrecking sales of tulips in Holland and shuttering the Statue of Liberty in the U.S.



Health services staff members protest outside the Txagorritxu hospital demanding more protection equipment, after a Spanish nurse died Thursday from coronavirus COVID-19 in a hospital, in Vitoria, northern Spain, Friday March 20, 2020. Spain will mobilise 200 billion euros for workers and

vulnerable citizens, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez announced Tuesday. For many people the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, but for some it causes more severe illness, especially in older adults and people with existing health problems. (AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos)

Governments are trying to balance locking down residents with the need to keep food, medicine and other essentials flowing.

In Britain, the category of vital workers includes doctors, nurses and paramedics—and also vicars, truckers, garbage collectors and journalists. In New York, people will allowed out for grocery shopping, necessary errands and solitary exercise. They will have to stay at least 6 feet apart.

"These provisions will be enforced," Cuomo said. "These are not helpful hints."

In Bergamo, the epicenter of the Italian outbreak, cemeteries were overwhelmed. Patients at the city's main hospital lined up in a narrow ward, struggling for breath as doctors and nurses moved swiftly from one beeping machine to the next.

"When the virus arrived here, there was no containment and it spread through the valleys very quickly. ... Some said it was the normal flu. We doctors knew it was not," said Dr. Luca Lorini, head of intensive care at the hospital, where nearly 500 beds were dedicated to people suffering severe virus symptoms. Eighty patients were in intensive care.



Italian soldiers patrol as the Duomo gothic cathedral is visible in background, in Milan, Friday, March 20, 2020. Mayors of many towns in Italy are asking for ever more stringent measures on citizens' movements to help contain the surging infections of the coronavirus. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness. (AP Photo/Luca Bruno)

In the Italian farm town of Fondi, home to a wholesale produce market serving Rome and Naples, a new ordinance banned all but essential people from entering or leaving after 40 elderly residents became infected.

At a convent on the outskirts of Rome, 19 of 21 nuns were infected, according to the Italian daily Il Messaggero. A Vatican decree absolved

the sins of the faithful who were sick or in quarantine, as well as those of their caregivers, if they met certain conditions.

"Certain medical centers are suffering stress that is reaching the limit," said Fernando Simón, director of Spain's center for health alerts and emergencies. "The difficult days in which we must bear down are coming now. We must keep our focus."

Although the illness is mild in most people, the elderly are particularly susceptible to serious symptoms. Italy has the world's second-oldest population, and the vast majority of its dead—87%—were over 70.



A healthcare worker prepares to collect a sample to test for COVID-19 at a drive-through testing site Friday, March 20, 2020, at the Doris Ison Health Center in Miami. (AP Photo/Wilfredo Lee)

Some of the only good news came from Wuhan, the Chinese city where the outbreak began and where hospitals were struggling just weeks ago. For the second day in a row, no new infections were reported and only 39 cases were recorded nationwide—all brought from the outside, the government said.

With the crisis waning there, China has begun sending medical supplies to Europe.

The effects of the global economy grinding to a halt took their toll, from millions of unsold flowers rotting in piles in Kenya to the slow emptying of the world's skies.

In the U.S., Congress worked to put together a \$1 trillion emergency package to prop up industry and small businesses and dispense relief checks of \$1,200 for adults and \$500 per child. The British government likewise unveiled a huge relief package under which the country for the time in its history would help pay the wages of those in the private sector.



Vesselin Mareshki, right, leader of Bulgarian Political party Volya, and an MP from from his party wear protective suits during Parliamentary session in the Bulgarian National Assembly in Sofia, Bulgaria, on Friday March 20, 2020. For some people the COVID-19 coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, but for some it can cause very severe illness.(AP Photo/Vesselin Borishev)



Muslim men perform Friday prayer at the distance of about one meter (3 ft) to each other as a social distancing effort to prevent the spread of new coronavirus outbreak at Al Akbar mosque in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia, Friday, March 20, 2020. The vast majority of people recover from the new coronavirus. According to the World Health Organization, most people recover in about two to six weeks, depending on the severity of the illness. (AP Photo/Trisnadi)



A worker sprays disinfectant as a precaution against the new coronavirus at Chatuchak Market in Bangkok, Thailand, Friday, March 20, 2020. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)



A woman beats a cooking top in Geneva, Switzerland, Friday, March 20, 2020 during the 'Switzerland says thank you' campaign to thank paramedics who fight against the new coronavirus and the COVID-19 disease. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness. (Martial Trezzini/Keystone via AP)



People wear face masks as they walk through an office complex in Beijing, Friday, March 20, 2020. Italy's deaths from the coronavirus pandemic eclipsed China's on Thursday as the scourge extended its march across the West, where the United States and other countries increasingly enlisted the military to prepare for an onslaught of patients and California's governor ordered people in the most-populous U.S. state to stay home. The virus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, for most people, but severe illness is more likely in the elderly and people with existing health problems. (AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein)



An MTA employee sanitizes surfaces at the CLasson Ave. and Lafayette Ave. subway station with bleach solutions due to COVID-19 concerns, Friday, March 20, 2020, in the Brooklyn Borough in New York. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo is ordering all workers in non-essential businesses to stay home and banning gatherings statewide. "Only essential businesses can have workers commuting to the job or on the job," Cuomo said of an executive order he will sign Friday. Nonessential gatherings of individuals of any size or for any reason are canceled or postponed. (AP Photo/John Minchillo)



A member of the health service at Txagorritxu hospital walks along the perimeter of the hospital, in Vitoria, northern Spain, Vitoria, northern Spain, March 20, 2020. Spain will mobilize 200 billion euros or the equivalent to one fifth of the country's annual output in loans, credit guarantees and subsidies for workers and vulnerable citizens, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez announced Tuesday. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some, it can cause more severe illness, especially in older adults and people with existing health problems. (AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos)



An open-air double decker sightseeing bus stops on the slopes of Table Mountain, overlooking the city of Cape Town, South Africa, Friday March, 20, 2020 Anxiety rose in Africa's richest nation Friday as South Africa announced coronavirus cases jumped to 202, the most in the sub-Saharan region, while the country's largest airport announced that foreigners would not be allowed to disembark. And state-owned South African Airways suspended all international flights until June. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. (AP Photo)



A face mask on the ground as a woman walks with her dog along a street in downtown Barcelona, Spain, Friday, March 20, 2020. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some, it can cause more severe illness, especially in older adults and people with existing health problems. (AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti)

French President Emmanuel Macron urged employees to keep working in supermarkets, production sites and other necessary businesses amid stringent movement restrictions.

"We need to keep the country running," Macron said.

Iran's official toll of more than 1,400 dead was rising quickly as well amid fears it is underreporting its cases. Tehran accused Washington of

helping spread the virus by retaining sanctions that prevent it importing desperately needed medicine and medical equipment.

As the virus strengthened its foothold in Africa, the continent's busiest airport, in Johannesburg, announced that foreigners will no longer be allowed to disembark.

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