

New York to shut down as it becomes next virus hot spot

March 22 2020, by Jim Mustian and Jeffrey Collins



Due to the coronavirus, a parishioner prays during a modest and shortened service at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Basilica Sunday, March 22, 2020, in Phoenix. (AP Photo/Ross D. Franklin)

New York City's mayor prepared Monday to order his city behind closed doors in an attempt to slow a pandemic that has swept across the globe

and threatened to make the city of 8.5 million one of the world's biggest coronavirus hot spots. Officials worldwide warned of a critical shortage of medical supplies.

Mayor Bill de Blasio also called for getting everything from masks to gowns, as well as doctors and other medical workers to New York City, and asked President Donald Trump to have the U.S. military take over the logistics of making and distributing medical supplies.

"I can't be blunt enough. If the president doesn't act, people will die who could have lived otherwise," de Blasio told NBC's "Meet The Press."

The top infectious disease expert in the U.S. promised New York City and the other hardest-hit places that critical supplies will not run out.

The medical supplies are about to start pouring in and will be "clearly directed to those hot spots that need it most," Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said on CBS' "Face The Nation."

But Fauci and other emergency officials did not give hard figures on the number of masks or anything else on their way. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo urged [federal officials](#) to step in quickly as hard-hit states outbid each other for ever scarcer supplies, sometimes doubling or tripling prices.



Less traffic on I-94 South bound in Chicago, Sunday, March 22, 2020. Gov. J.B. Pritzker on Friday issued a stay-at-home order, the most strict statewide action he's taken to date in the effort to prevent further spread of the new coronavirus. Pritzker's order follows statewide schools closures, restrictions on the size of gatherings, and an order for bars and restaurants to suspend dine-in service. (AP Photo/Nam Y. Huh)

In Washington, negotiators from Congress and the White House resumed top-level talks on a \$1.4 trillion economic rescue package, urged by President Donald Trump to strike a deal to steady a nation upended by the [coronavirus](#) pandemic. Trump appeared confident about the nation's ability to defeat the pandemic soon even as health leaders acknowledged that the U.S. was nowhere near the peak of the outbreak.

Worldwide, more than 316,000 people have been infected and nearly 13,600 have died, according to Johns Hopkins University. About 150 countries now have confirmed cases, and deaths have been reported in more than 30 American states.

There were more than 27,000 cases across the U.S. and 381 deaths. New York state accounted for 114 deaths, mostly in New York City, where there were more than 4,400 infections, but officials warned the concentration may be more because of increased testing.



A woman stands in front of the Duomo gothic cathedral, in downtown Milan, Italy, Sunday, March 22, 2020. Italian Premier Giuseppe Conte has told the nation he is tightening the lockdown to fight the rampaging spread of coronavirus, shutting down all production facilities except those that are "necessary, crucial, indispensable to guarantee" the good of the country. 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/Antonio Calanni)

On Sunday, New York passed Washington state, the initial epicenter of the U.S. outbreak, in the number of fatal cases. Only China, Italy and Spain have reported more COVID-19 cases than the U.S.

Cuomo spent Saturday scouting places to build makeshift hospitals and told existing hospitals to figure out ways to increase their current beds by at least 50% because predictions from [health officials](#) are COVID-19 cases needing advanced medical care will top 100,000 in New York state in the next month or so, which is more than double the current number.

New York City hospitals were already discharging thousands of patients to create additional capacity for patients like 44-year-old David Lat, on a ventilator as he fought the virus.

Lat, a writer, former federal prosecutor and two-time New York City marathon runner, told his Twitter followers last week that it had taken him 90 minutes to eat his lunch because he kept getting winded, the fork wobbling each time he lifted it to his mouth.



Commuters wear face masks inside a bus in Madrid, Spain on Sunday, March 22, 2020. Spanish health authorities have acknowledged that some intensive care units in the hardest-hit areas are close to their limit. The army was building a field hospital with 5,500 beds in a convention center in Madrid, where hotels are also being turned into wards for virus patients without serious breathing problems. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness. (AP Photo/Bernat Armangue)

"For the most part he's just an incredibly fit, healthy individual," Lat's husband, Zachary Baron Shemtob, told The Associated Press. "It shows how serious this virus is."

De Blasio called on New York City to shut down at 5 p.m. Sunday

except for essential services and workers.

But with the danger an invisible virus instead of billowing smoke or blowing snow, New Yorkers were still gathering in large groups in parks, playing basketball or having block parties. Similar scenes played out around the country.

Cuomo said he was stunned and offended as he toured the city Saturday and gave local officials a day to figure out a plan, whether it be closing parks, closing playgrounds or opening streets, typically teeming with traffic but now quiet, only to pedestrians.

"It's insensitive. It's arrogant. It's self-destructive. It's disrespectful to other people," Cuomo said. "It has to stop and it has to stop now."



Volunteers workers of Search and Rescue (SAR) with special equipment, disinfect a police car at Local Police station to prevent the spread of coronavirus COVID-19, in Pamplona, northern Spain, Sunday, March 22, 2020. For some people the COVID-19 coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, but for some it causes severe illness. (AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos)

Along with the staggering numbers, there were individual reminders Sunday of the reach of the virus. Republican Rand Paul of Kentucky became the first U.S. senator to announce he was infected. Opera superstar Plácido Domingo announced he has COVID-19 and German Chancellor Angela Merkel put herself into quarantine after a doctor who gave her a vaccine tested positive.

Elsewhere in the world, the coronavirus raged on. Italy and Iran reported soaring new death tolls.

Italian Premier Giuseppe Conte went on live TV to announce that he was tightening the country's lockdown. Italy now has more than 59,000 cases and 5,476 deaths.

"We are facing the most serious crisis that the country has experienced since World War II," Conte said.

Still, the head of Italy's Civil Protection Agency, Angelo Borrelli, noted that the increases had narrowed from recent days, adding "we hope that this trend can be confirmed in the coming days. We should not lower our guard."



Japan's Princess Aiko, daughter of Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako, wearing a protective face mask following an outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), waves to well-wishers as she attends her graduation ceremony at Gakushuin Girls' Senior High School in Tokyo, Sunday, March 22, 2020. (Issei Kato/Pool Photo via AP)

Iran's supreme leader refused U.S. assistance to fight the virus, citing an unfounded conspiracy theory that it could be made by America. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's comments came as Iran faces crushing U.S. sanctions over its nuclear actions. Iran says it has 1,685 deaths and 21,638 confirmed cases of the virus—a toll that experts from the World Health Organization say is almost certainly under-reported.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever or coughing. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. Some 93,800 people have recovered, mostly in China.

In Croatia, a strong earthquake measuring 5.3 near Zagreb caused the evacuation of hospitals and widespread damage. Health Minister Vili Beros warned people fleeing their homes to avoid congregating in [public places](#).



Pope Francis delivers his blessing from the window of his private library overlooking St. Peter's Square, at the Vatican, Sunday, March 22, 2020. During his weekly Sunday blessing, held due to virus concerns in his private library in the Apostolic Palace, he urged all Christians to join in reciting the "Our Father"

prayer next Wednesday at noon. And he said that he would lead a global blessing to an empty St. Peter's Square on Friday. 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/Andrew Medichini)

"Earthquakes are dangerous, but coronavirus is even more so," Beros said. Seventeen injuries but no deaths were reported.

In the rest of the United States, parts of the country found themselves moving toward the kind of problems seen in New York.

There was a unified message to stay away from large gatherings. Louisiana on Sunday joined New York, California and Illinois with statewide stay-at-home orders. Officials in other places called them different things—social distancing, sheltering in place, or in the case of Nashville, Tennessee, a "safer at home" order.

"We're all in quarantine now. Think about it," Cuomo said.

Enforcement of any of these orders is still up in the air. Most locations simply broke up large gatherings and sent people home because one of the last things health officials wanted was putting more people in confined spaces like jails. Many governments were releasing some non-violent inmates.



Parish vicar Patrick Stauss conducts a service of the catholic parish of the Assumption of Mary via YouTube in an empty church in Winterbach, Germany, Sunday, March 22, 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. (Sebastian Gollnow/dpa via AP)

Nearly 40 inmates had been diagnosed as of Saturday with COVID-19 in the New York prison system including the notorious Rikers Island complex and officials warned a huge jump in cases was likely coming.

The world kept shutting down too. The long-haul airline Emirates—a major East-West carrier—said it will suspend all passenger flights beginning Wednesday. Singapore said it will fully shut its borders

beginning Tuesday.

Sunday was Mother's Day in Britain and the government had a stark message for millions: Visiting your mother could kill her. Instead of parties, lunch or tea, Prime Minister Boris Johnson implored Britons to call Mom on a video chat.

Doctors in Britain made urgent pleas for more protective equipment as the number of coronavirus patients in U.K. hospitals soared to more than 5,000. Almost 4,000 [medical workers](#) signed a letter to the Sunday Times saying front-line staff felt like "cannon fodder." They warned that medics would die if they did not receive better equipment.



People visit the cherry blossom trees in full bloom at the tidal basin, Sunday, March 22, 2020, in Washington. Sections of the National Mall and tidal basin

have been closed to vehicular traffic to encourage people to practice social distancing and not visit Washington's iconic cherry blossoms this year due to coronavirus concerns. The trees are in full bloom this week and would traditionally draw large crowds. (AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin)

In Spain, Europe's hardest-hit country after Italy, intensive care units in some areas were close to their limits even before Sunday's new tally of more than 28,500 infections and 1,750 deaths. A field hospital with 5,500 beds was going up in a convention center in Madrid and health officials warned more than 10% of the country's health workers were now infected with coronavirus.

But there were some signs of hope. The Chinese city of Wuhan—where the global pandemic was first detected and the first city to be locked down—went a fourth consecutive day on Sunday without reporting any new or suspected cases.

Parks and other public gathering places were reopening in China as people return to work and businesses resumed. However, the country has placed increasing restrictions on those coming from overseas.



A man walks along a road leading to St. Mary Major Basilica, silhouetted in background, in Rome, Sunday, March 22, 2020. Italian Premier Giuseppe Conte has told the nation he is tightening the lockdown to fight the rampaging spread of coronavirus, shutting down all production facilities except those that are "necessary, crucial, indispensable to guarantee" the good of the country. 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/Alessandra Tarantino)



A woman attends a Sunday mass service at the Nairobi Baptist Church, which was streamed live on the internet with almost no attendees in order to limit the spread of the new coronavirus, in the capital Nairobi, Kenya Sunday, March 22, 2020. In Kenya, the Ministry of Health has banned all public gatherings and meetings in order to limit the spread of the new coronavirus that causes COVID-19 but has permitted normal church services to continue so long as they provide hand sanitizing or washing facilities to attendees. (AP Photo/Brian Inganga)



A city police officer checks residents at an open air market in Lille, northern France Sunday, March 22, 2020. French President Emmanuel Macron urged employees to keep working in supermarkets, production sites and other businesses that need to keep running amid stringent restrictions of movement due to the rapid spreading of the new coronavirus in the country. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness. (AP Photo/Michel Spingler)



Young Christian faithful of the Legio Maria African Mission attend a Sunday mass service in the Kibera slum of the capital Nairobi, Kenya Sunday, March 22, 2020. In Kenya, the Ministry of Health has banned all public gatherings and meetings in order to limit the spread of the new coronavirus that causes COVID-19 but has permitted normal church services to continue so long as they provide hand sanitizing or washing facilities to attendees. (AP Photo/Brian Inganga)



A man wearing a mask walks through a deserted train station in Mumbai, India, Sunday, March 22, 2020. India is Sunday observing a 14-hour "people's curfew" called by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in order to stem the rising coronavirus caseload in the country of 1.3 billion. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness. (AP Photo/Rafiq Maqbool)



The highway along the airport is empty in Frankfurt, Germany, Sunday, March 22, 2020. Due to the coronavirus the aviation industry expects heavy losses. 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/Michael Probst)



People clap from balconies in show of appreciation to health care workers at a Chawl in Mumbai, India, Sunday, March 22, 2020. India is Sunday observing a 14-hour "people's curfew" called by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in order to stem the rising coronavirus caseload in the country of 1.3 billion For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness. (AP Photo/Rafiq Maqbool)



A municipal tanker sprays disinfectant as a precaution against the coronavirus outbreak in Beirut, Lebanon, Sunday, March 22, 2020. Lebanon has been taking strict measures to limit the spread of the coronavirus closing restaurants and nightclubs as well as schools and universities. For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. For some it can cause more severe illness. (AP Photo/Bilal Hussein)

Pope Francis again held his weekly Sunday blessing in his private library.

"To the virus pandemic, we want to respond with the universality of prayer, of compassion, of tenderness," the pope said, also asking all Christianity across denominations to join in reciting the "Our Father" prayer on Wednesday at noon.

Pope Francis also plans to lead a global blessing to an empty St. Peter's Square on Friday. The "Urbi et Orbi" blessing is normally reserved for Christmas Day and Easter.

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