

## Governor to take ventilators for NYC as hospitals buckle

April 3 2020, by Marina Villeneuve, John Leicester and Aritz Parra

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A medical staffer holds up a phone in front of a Covid-19 patient for a video call with relatives at Bergamo's Papa Giovanni XXIII hospital, northern Italy, Friday, April 3, 2020. The new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people, but for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness or death.(Claudio Furlan/LaPresse via AP)

With coronavirus deaths surging in New York, the governor announced Friday he will use his authority to seize ventilators and protective gear from private hospitals and companies that aren't using them—one of the most aggressive steps yet in the U.S. to relieve severe shortages of equipment needed to fight the scourge.

"If they want to sue me for borrowing their excess ventilators to save lives, let them sue me," Gov. Andrew Cuomo said. He added that he will eventually return the equipment or compensate the owners.

The executive order he said he would sign is aimed at the kind of shortages around the world that authorities say have caused health care workers to fall sick and forced doctors in Europe to make life-or-death decisions about which patients get a breathing machine. Cuomo has said New York could run out of ventilators next week.

The number of the people infected in the U.S. surpassed a quarter-million and the death toll climbed past 6,600, with New York state alone accounting for more than 2,900 dead, a surge of over 560 in just one day. Most of the dead are in New York City, where hospitals are getting swamped with patients. About 15,000 people were hospitalized statewide, most of them in the city.

The move by Cuomo came as the outbreak snapped the United States' record-breaking hiring streak of nearly 10 years. The U.S. government said employers slashed over 700,000 jobs last month, bringing a swift end to the nation's 50-year-low unemployment rate.



A man takes a photograph of mural on the side of Horse Vaults pub in honour of the NHS amid the growing coronavirus outbreak, in Pontefract, England, Friday April 3, 2020. (Danny Lawson/PA via AP)

The true picture, though, is far worse, because the government figures do not include the last two weeks, when nearly 10 million thrown-out-of-work Americans applied for unemployment benefits.

Worldwide, confirmed infections surged past 1 million and deaths topped 56,000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. Experts say both numbers are seriously undercounted because of the lack of testing, mild cases that were missed and governments that are underplaying the crisis.

Europe's three worst-hit countries—Italy, Spain and France—surpassed 30,000 dead, or over half of the global toll. The crisis there was seen as a frightening portent for places like New York, the epicenter of the U.S. outbreak, where bodies are being loaded by forklift into refrigerated trucks outside hospitals.

Shortages of such things as masks, gowns and ventilators have led to fierce competition among buyers from Europe, the U.S. and elsewhere.



Commuters wearing face masks to protect themselves from the new coronavirus are reflected in a mirror at a skytrain station in Bangkok, Thailand, Friday, April 3, 2020. Thailand's prime minister announced a nationwide 10 p.m.-to-4 a.m curfew starting Friday to combat the spread of the coronavirus. The new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people, but for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause

more severe illness or death. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)

A regional leader in Paris described the scramble to find masks a "worldwide treasure hunt," and the French prime minister said he is "fighting hour by hour" to ward off shortages of essential drugs used to keep COVID-19 patients alive.

Cuomo, who has complained in recent days that states are being forced to compete against each other for vital equipment in eBay-like bidding wars, called for a coordinated national approach that would send supplies and people to different areas as their needs peak.

More than 1,200 miles south, the situation grew more dire by the day in Louisiana, where more than 10,000 people have tested positive and deaths climbed to at least 370, up nearly 20 percent from the day before. Gov. John Bel Edwards warned that the hard-hit New Orleans area is projected to run out of ventilators by Tuesday and hospital beds five days later.



Medical staff of a mobile unit collects samples to test for Covid-19 from people at a drive-through position at the Santa Maria della Pieta' hospital complex, in Rome, Friday, April 3, 2020. The new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people, but for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness or death. (AP Photo/Alessandra Tarantino) .

Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center in Baton Rouge has gone from one unit dedicated to coronavirus patients to seven. Nurse Christen Hyde said nurses call family members twice a day to update them on how their family members are doing, in some cases delivering bleak news.

"To have to call a family member and tell them that their family member

is not doing well and they are probably going to be passing soon is just devastating," said Hyde, who has had four patients die.

As for the patients, "the last thing that they see is us telling them that they are going to have a tube placed down their throat to help them breathe," she said. "It's awful. It's horrible. It's really affected me."

In Florida, hundreds of passengers on a cruise ship where four people died were finally being allowed to disembark after a days-long standoff. More than a dozen critically ill patients were taken to hospitals, while people healthy enough to travel were taken to the airport for chartered flights home.



A worker carries a crate loaded with bags of fruit and vegetables onto a van that will be delivered to frontline workers at three NHS hospitals, at Borough Market in London, Friday, April 3, 2020. 'Feed the Frontline', has initially been funded

by private businesses throughout the month of April and aims to run throughout the peak of the COVID-19 coronavirus crisis. (AP Photo/Frank Augstein)

Some glimmers of hope emerged that Italy, with about 14,700 dead, as well as Spain and France might be flattening their infection curves and nearing or even passing their peaks in daily deaths.

Still, "the work is extremely tough and heavy," said Philippe Montravers, an anesthesiologist in Paris. "We've had doctors, nurses, caregivers who got sick, infected ... but who have come back after recovering. It's a bit like those World War I soldiers who were injured and came back to fight."

France canceled its high school exit exam known as the Baccalaureat, a first in the 212-year history of the test.

Spain reported 932 new deaths, down slightly from the record it hit a day earlier. The carnage most certainly included large numbers of elderly who authorities admit are not getting access to the country's limited breathing machines, which are being used first on healthier, younger patients. More than half of Spain's death toll of nearly 11,000 has come in the last seven days alone.





A jogger runs by a mural which reads "Stay at Home, Life is Beautiful" Thursday, April 2, 2020, in Los Angeles. California is in its second week of a statewide lockdown, where schools and nonessential businesses are closed and the governor has ordered people to stay home. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez)

In a vast exhibition center in Madrid that was hastily converted into a 1,300-bed field hospital, bed No. 01.30 held patient Esteban Pinaredo, age 87.

"I'm good, I love you," Pinaredo told his family via Skype. "I will run away as soon as I can."

The facility's organizer, Antonio Zapatero, said Spain's nationwide lockdown must be maintained.

"Otherwise, this is what you are facing," he said, pointing at the rows of beds.

In some places in Europe, officials began talking tentatively about how to lift lockdowns that have staved off the total collapse of the health systems but have also battered economies.

But Chancellor Angela Merkel, speaking in her first video message after emerging from two weeks of home quarantine, urged Germans to stay home over Easter, saying it would be irresponsible for her to set a date now for loosening restrictions that include a ban on public gatherings of more than two people.



A man wearing a mask to protect himself against the spread of coronavirus raises

his fist aboard a passenger ship docked at a pier in in the port of Piraeus, near Athens, Friday, April 3, 2020. Greek authorities say a more than 100 people on board the ship have been confirmed as tested positive for the new coronavirus. The ship, a ferry chartered to house workers from various countries who were to work on a shipbuilding project in Spain, has been anchored outside Greece's main port of Piraeus for several days. Those who have tested positive will be quarantined for 14 days on board the ship. (AP Photo/Lefteris Pitarakis)



Unmasked worshippers offer Friday prayers at a mosque during a lockdown to to help stop the spread of the coronavirus in Peshawar, Pakistan, March, 3, 2020. Some mosques were allowed to remain open in Pakistan on Friday, the Muslim sabbath when adherents gather for weekly prayers, even as the coronavirus pandemic spread and much of the country had shut down. (AP Photo/Muhammad Sajjad)



Soldiers and police stand guard during a lockdown to help stop the spread of the coronavirus in Karachi, Pakistan, Friday, March, 3, 2020. Some mosques were allowed to remain open in Pakistan on Friday, the Muslim sabbath when adherents gather for weekly prayers, even as the coronavirus pandemic spread and much of the country had shut down. (AP Photo/Fareed Khan)



A man with a protective face mask to protect against the spread of the coronavirus walks through the shadows casted from a building Friday, April 3, 2020, in Tokyo. The new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people, but for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness or death. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)



Medical staff wearing protective gear walk inside a disinfecting tunnel outside a hospital where most COVID-19 patients are being treated in Srinagar, Indian controlled Kashmir, Friday, April 3, 2020. The new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people, but for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness or death. (AP Photo/ Dar Yasin)



A man wears a face mask to protect against the spread of coronavirus as he walks among blossoms at Yuyuantan Park in Beijing, Friday, April 3, 2020. Beijing has reopened most public parks as the pace of new infections has slowed in China's capital though many are limiting the number of visitors per day or requiring advance purchase of admission tickets. (AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein)



An officer checks the temperature of a passenger in a bus at a health checkpoint in Bangkok, Thailand, Friday, April 3, 2020. Thailand's prime minister announced a nationwide 10 p.m.-to-4 a.m curfew starting Friday to combat the spread of the coronavirus. The new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people, but for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness or death. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)





A worker empties a trash can at a quarantine center built to accommodate patients with the coronavirus in Serdang, on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Friday, April 3, 2020. The Malaysian government issued a restricted movement order to the public for the rest of the month to help curb the spread of the new coronavirus. (AP Photo/Vincent Thian)



Light traffic is seen on California 110 with the city skyline in the background Thursday, April 2, 2020, in Los Angeles. California is in its second week of a statewide lockdown, where schools and nonessential businesses are closed and the governor has ordered people to stay home. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez)

With forecast glorious spring weather likely to tempt stir-crazy families out of lockdown this weekend, the message across the continent remained: "Stay home." Paris police set up roadblocks outside the city to stop those trying to escape for Easter vacation.

Meanwhile, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who tested positive last week, said in a video message on Twitter that he is feeling better but still has a fever and will remain in isolation.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for others, especially older adults and people with health problems, it can cause pneumonia. The World Health Organization said this week that 95% of the deaths in Europe were of people over 60.

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