

Virus-hit US girds for 'Pearl Harbor moment' as death toll spikes

April 5 2020



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

US governors on Sunday appealed to the White House for a national strategy against the fast-spreading coronavirus, as deaths surged and health authorities warned the coming week could resemble a "Pearl

Harbor moment."

The US death toll was creeping toward the grim milestone of 10,000 as the pandemic's epicenter in New York racked up hundreds of lives lost a day and hospitals girded for an influx of new infected patients.

Anthony Fauci, the senior American scientist battling the pandemic stateside, warned of a looming "escalation," saying Americans should prepare for "a bad week."

"I will not say we have it under control," Fauci told CBS on Sunday. "That would be a false statement."

US Surgeon General Jerome Adams sounded an even more dire warning.

"This is going to be the hardest and the saddest week of most Americans' lives, quite frankly," he told Fox News.

"This is going to be our Pearl Harbor moment, our 9-11 moment, only it's not going to be localized."

Adams said Americans should continue to practice social distancing and stay home for at least 30 days.

Most of the nation is under shelter-in-place orders, but nine states have yet to issue such regulations, while the [federal government](#) has declined to mandate anything on a national level.

Adams noted that the nine states without orders were those producing much of the US food supply.

Still, he pleaded with state leaders to urge residents to stay home for at least the next seven to 10 days: "There is a light at the end of the tunnel

if everyone does their part."

Hitting a plateau?

The coronavirus death toll in hardest-hit New York state rose to 4,159, Governor Andrew Cuomo said, up from 3,565 a day prior.

It was the first time the day-over-day toll had dropped—on Saturday it hit a record 630 deaths in 24 hours—but Cuomo told journalists it was too early to tell whether that was a "blip."

New York's peak could arrive over the next week, he said, though he cautioned it was unclear if the apex would be a point, followed quickly by a decline, or a lingering plateau.

"We won't know for the next few days—does it go up, does it go down," Cuomo said. His state has now reported 122,031 confirmed infections—roughly one-tenth the worldwide total.

Cuomo said he aimed to shift patients away from already overburdened hospitals to others with more capacity and equipment.

"I can't say to a hospital, I will send you all the supplies you need, all the vents you need. We don't have them," he said, referring to life-saving ventilator equipment. "You are going to have to shift and deploy to different locations."

The governor said rapid testing, still out-of-reach, was key to a "return to normalcy," while reiterating appeals for equipment including ventilators from other states as well as from the federal stockpile.

Cuomo vowed to return the favor as the virus spreads elsewhere—New Jersey, Michigan and Louisiana are all emerging hotspots—saying that

New York could offer a strategic blueprint.

'All hands on deck'

But on the Sunday morning talk show circuit, other state governors voiced alarm that the Donald Trump administration has not offered a unified policy plan.

"Not having a national strategy where there is one policy for the country as opposed to a patchwork based on whomever the governor is, is something that I think is creating a more porous situation where COVID-19 will go longer and more people will get sick and," Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer said on Fox News.

"More lives may get lost."

"We are not one another's enemy," she added. "The enemy is COVID-19. And it has to be all hands on deck, from the federal level, to the state level, to the local level."

On Saturday, President Trump said the US was entering "a time that's going to be very horrendous" with "some really bad numbers."

"This will probably be the toughest week," he said at the White House. "There will be a lot of death."

But he again stressed that the US—where infections have surpassed 300,000—cannot remain economically shut down forever, and he continued to leave it to the states to declare their own mitigation strategies and lockdown orders.

Illinois' Democratic governor J.B. Pritzker skewered the Trump administration for not better preparing the nation, leaving the virus to

slam the US as it has Europe and China.

"If they had started in February building ventilators, getting ready for this pandemic, we would not have the problems that we have today, and frankly, very many fewer people would die," he told CNN.

© 2020 AFP

Citation: Virus-hit US girds for 'Pearl Harbor moment' as death toll spikes (2020, April 5)
retrieved 26 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-04-virus-hit-girds-pearl-harbor-moment.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.