

Malls, movies, gyms in New York still not cleared to reopen

June 25 2020



Customers dine outside Dudley's, Monday, June 22, 2020, in New York. New York City ventured into a crucial stage of reopening as stores let people in Monday, offices brought workers back, restaurants seated customers outdoors and residents both welcomed and worried about rebounding from the nation's deadliest coronavirus outbreak. (AP Photo/John Minchillo)

Malls, movie theaters and gyms will not be cleared to open again when areas of New York state progress to the fourth phase of the state's reopening plan Friday.

The businesses had been hoping Gov. Andrew Cuomo would allow them to open their doors after an over three-month shutdown bought on by the pandemic.

Cuomo has repeatedly said arts, entertainment and recreation could start to reopen in phase 4, and has said he's been considering whether to allow malls to reopen. But his administration has decided to only ease restrictions to allow "low-risk" arts and entertainment in the fourth phase, and prohibit gyms from providing [indoor activities](#).

The decision, [first reported](#) by the Times-Union of Albany, leaves business owners uncertain of when they will be able to welcome back customers.

A spokesman for Cuomo on Wednesday cited recent surges in states that have allowed a wide range of businesses to reopen.

"There are some things that don't fit neatly into a phase that are going to require further study and we're going through that right now. This includes evaluating what's going on in other states to avoid going backwards," spokesman Richard Azzopardi wrote in an email.

Cuomo said he's seen reports that air conditioning at malls, bars and certain social clubs may not be "cleansing the air of the virus" and instead recirculating the virus.

"Anyone who thinks this is a static situation is wrong," Cuomo said, adding: "As soon as we get some more information, we'll make an [informed decision](#)."

Areas of the state are phasing in reopenings on different timetables. The Southern Tier, Mohawk Valley, Finger Lakes, Central New York and North Country are set to move to Phase 4 on Friday, Cuomo said Wednesday, which would allow an easing of restrictions on [higher education](#) and "low-risk" arts and entertainment.

New York's allowing social gatherings of up to 50 people in phase 4, up from 25 in the third phase. Indoor religious gatherings can open up to a third of occupancy in the fourth phase, up from 25% currently.

Cuomo said the state's hospitals and nursing homes reported the deaths of 17 people who tested positive for COVID-19 Tuesday. Meanwhile, around 1% of New Yorkers are testing positive for COVID-19—581 of about 51,000 people tested Tuesday—even as the state's rapidly boosted its testing capacity.

Roughly 1,000 New Yorkers with COVID-19 are hospitalized, according to Cuomo.

"We don't want to see these numbers reverse," Cuomo said.

New York City entered phase two this week. Mayor Bill de Blasio announced late Tuesday that the city's municipal beaches will open for swimming, with lifeguards, on July 1. Up until now, people have only been allowed on the sand.

De Blasio on Wednesday called opening beaches "another part of our comeback."

"We are able to do it because this city got healthier," he said.

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