

Virus brings closings in US state, WHO warnings in Europe

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While both North Carolina and Mississippi have mandates for people to wear face coverings in public places to slow the spread of the coronavirus, Gov. Tate Reeves did not while speaking at this rally for Republican Lt. Gov. Dan Forest at the Rowan County Fairgrounds in Salisbury, N.C., on Sunday, Aug. 23, 2020. Forest is running for governor against incumbent Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper. Reeves said Tuesday, Aug. 25, at a news briefing, that he wore a mask 90% of the time while in North Carolina and that he only took his mask off to speak at the rally in support of Forest. (Ben Stansell/The Salisbury Post, via AP)

As the coronavirus death toll mounts around the world, the U.S. state of Iowa closed bars in several of its largest counties in response to swelling numbers of confirmed virus cases and debates flared around the country over mask requirements.

Elected officials in a Mississippi city got into a dispute after some refused to wear [masks](#), prompting the mayor to clear out the room and enforce social distancing between board members after the meeting restarted.

Meanwhile, the World Health Organization's top official in Europe said Thursday that rising infections among [young people](#) could spread to older people and cause an uptick in deaths. Dr. Hans Kluge said younger people are likely to come into closer contact with the elderly as the weather cools in Europe and families move activities inside.

More than 800,000 people across the world have died from the virus and more than 24.2 million have contracted it, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University—figures experts say understate the true toll because of limited testing, missed mild cases and other factors.

In Italy, the day-to-day increase in new cases rose again on Thursday. And a senior U.N. humanitarian official said reports of Syrian health care facilities filling up and increasing death notices and burials appear to show that actual cases of COVID-19 "far exceed official figures."



People crowd the commuter train platforms at Atocha station in Madrid, Spain, Thursday, Aug. 27, 2020. Authorities in Madrid, the hottest spot in Spain's new surge of coronavirus contagion, said Wednesday they only consider very localized stay-at-home orders for the worst-hit areas of the Spanish capital, discarding the idea locking down the city of 3.3 million. (AP Photo/Andrea Comas)

IOWA CLOSES BARS

Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds has ordered that all bars be closed in six of the state's largest counties in response to surging numbers of confirmed [coronavirus](#) cases blamed in part on young people ignoring mask and social distancing recommendations in such establishments.

Reynolds ordered the action in Black Hawk, Dallas, Linn, Johnson, Polk and Story counties effective at 5 p.m. Thursday on a day when the state saw nearly 1,500 confirmed cases, a new high that topped levels recorded in the spring.

In a 24-hour period as of Thursday morning, Iowa recorded 1,475 confirmed cases, surpassing the April 25 total of 1,284. During that period, there were 18 more deaths for a total of 1,079.

Reynolds said the increased cases are largely due to young people gathering, especially those returning to state universities.



Former workers of a bus route that was privatized, demand economic help from the government during a protest in Mexico City's main square, the Zocalo,

Wednesday, Aug. 26, 2020, amid the new coronavirus pandemic. According to the demonstrators they still have not been paid from when they were retired by the government almost two decades ago. (AP Photo/Marco Ugarte)

In Story County, where Iowa State University is located, 28% of tests reported Wednesday were positive, and in Johnson County, where the University of Iowa is centered, it was 25%, according to state data.

ITALY CASE NUMBERS RISE

Italy's day-to-day increase in new cases rose again on Thursday but so did the number of COVID-19 swab tests done in the last 24 hours. The nation where Europe's coronavirus outbreak began registered 1,411 new cases since the previous day, raising to 263,949 the total of known infections.

Many of the newly infected are travelers returning from countries with many clusters of COVID-19 or from Sardinia, a popular Italian vacation island, as well as from tracing contacts with these cases. Dozens of cases have now been linked to clusters in trendy discos on Sardinia's Emerald Coast.



A woman sunbathes at the 'Biblioteca degli alberi' (Trees' Library) public park, as space around umbrellas is marked with chalk to keep social distance and prevent the spread of COVID-19, at the Porta Nuova business district in Milan, Italy, Thursday, Aug. 27, 2020. (AP Photo/Luca Bruno)

Several airports, including in Rome, Milan and Naples, as well as seaports now test travelers as soon as they disembark from aircraft or ferries. Most of those infected lately are in their 30s, 20s or teens, and often are asymptomatic. Still the number of hospitalized COVID-19 patients has been creeping upward. A month ago, the number of hospitalized patients had dipped to just over 700. In contrast, early in Italy's devastating outbreak, some 30,000 patients were hospitalized nationwide on any given day. On Thursday, 76 additional persons needed hospitalization, for a total of 1,131 non-intensive care patients in Italian

hospitals. Italy's known death toll increased by five, to a total of 35,463.

WHO SCIENTIST SAYS MASKS NOT ENOUGH

A top scientist at the World Health Organization said wearing masks alone to protect against the spread of the coronavirus isn't enough, expressing concerns that people are growing too lax on maintaining physical distancing.

Maria Van Kerkhove, technical lead of WHO's emergencies program, says she's becoming "a little bit concerned" that use of masks appear to be leading some people to think they don't need to keep safe distances from others.



People crowd the commuter train platforms at Atocha station in Madrid, Spain, Thursday, Aug. 27, 2020. Authorities in Madrid, the hottest spot in Spain's new surge of coronavirus contagion, said Wednesday they only consider very localized stay-at-home orders for the worst-hit areas of the Spanish capital, discarding the idea locking down the city of 3.3 million. (AP Photo/Andrea Comas)

"We're seeing that people aren't really adhering to the physical distancing anymore," she told reporters at a regular WHO news conference. "Even if you're wearing masks, you still need to try to do the physical distancing of at least 1 meter (3 feet) and even further if you can."

The U.N. health agency has laid out a number of recommendations including physical distancing, regular and thorough hand-washing, use of masks and other measures to fight COVID-19.

"So it's not just masks alone. It's not just physical distancing alone," Van Kerkhove said. "It's not just hand cleaning alone. Do it all."

MASK DISPUTE DISRUPTS CITY MEETING

Elected officials in a Mississippi city got into a dispute after some refused to wear masks to guard against the new coronavirus, prompting the mayor to clear out the room and enforce social distancing between [board members](#) after the meeting restarted.



Wearing masks to curb the spread of the new coronavirus, police guard the city government building during a protest in Mexico City, Wednesday, Aug. 26, 2020. (AP Photo/Marco Ugarte)

The feud in McComb meant the only way the public could watch the Board of Selectmen conduct business Tuesday night was on a video feed with poor audio quality, the Enterprise-Journal reported.

Mississippi remains under Republican Gov. Tate Reeves' order for people to wear masks in public. McComb also has a local mask mandate.

SYRIAN CASES COULD BE HIGHER

A senior U.N. humanitarian official says reports of Syrian health care

facilities filling up and increasing death notices and burials appear to indicate that actual coronavirus cases "far exceed official figures" confirmed by the government.

Assistant Secretary-General for humanitarian affairs Ramesh Rajasingham told the U.N. Security Council on Thursday that "rising patient numbers are adding pressure to the fragile health system."

He said many people "are reluctant to seek care at medical facilities, leading to more severe complications when they do arrive," and "health workers still lack sufficient personal protective equipment and associated supplies."



Ultra-Orthodox Jewish students study religious texts in a yeshiva, or Jewish seminary, using protective plastic shields set up amid the coronavirus pandemic,

that allows the customary practice of learning together with a partner, in Bnei Brak, Israel, Thursday, Aug. 27, 2020. Israel's ultra-Orthodox Jewish community has been especially hard hit by the country's coronavirus outbreak. (AP Photo/Oded Balilty)



A young boy stands near a coronavirus-themed mural as a motorist rides past by in Jakarta, Indonesia, Thursday, Aug. 27, 2020. (AP Photo/Tatan Syuflana)

Of the 2,440 cases confirmed by the Ministry of Health, Rajasingham said, "the majority cannot be traced to a known source."

He said several health facilities suspended operations this month because of capacity issues and staff becoming infected.

In Al Hol camp in northeast Syria, where 65,000 mainly women and children connected to Islamic State fighters are detained, Rajasingham said "12 health facilities had to suspend operations this month due to staff becoming infected, having to self-isolate, or due to lack of personal protective equipment." He said, "both field hospitals at the camp have since resumed operations."

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