

New York rolls out curbs as virus grips US, Europe

November 13 2020



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Bars and restaurants in America's biggest city will close early from Friday as the coronavirus outbreak surges across the United States and Europe, where Greece is being forced into a nighttime curfew.

It comes as the US, already the world's hardest-hit country, experiences its third and worst-by-far spike in infections, and large parts of Europe shut down again to tackle the illness.

New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo has announced that all establishments licensed to sell alcohol, including bars and restaurants, should close at 10 pm.

Also launching new restrictions is Greece, which begins a nighttime curfew Friday after its leader said the country had been overwhelmed by a "tsunami" of infections.

New York was the early epicenter of America's [coronavirus](#) pandemic, but hotspots have since popped up across the country, leaving practically no region in the US unaffected.

On Thursday, America's third biggest city, Chicago, issued a new stay-at-home advisory, with the mayor calling on its 2.7 million people to scrap Thanksgiving plans and avoid travel.

"Every single one of us needs to step up and 'Protect Chicago' right now, or 2020 could go from bad to worse," said a note on the city's website.

More than 1,000 people are dying every day from COVID-19 in the US, according to data from the COVID Tracking Project.

In embattled North Dakota, the governor has authorized COVID-19 positive medics who do not have symptoms to keep working in virus wards.

The world received a dose of much-needed hope this week when US drug giant Pfizer and Germany's BioNTech said their vaccine was 90 percent effective.

Top US government scientist Anthony Fauci welcomed the news Thursday, saying that the "cavalry" was on its way, but warned people not to let mask wearing, distancing and other measures slip.

Speaking to a London think-tank by video-link, the world-leading expert on [infectious diseases](#) said another vaccine is "literally on the threshold of being announced," a comment widely interpreted to mean one developed by US biotech firm Moderna.

But the vaccines will not arrive in time to prevent tens of thousands more deaths.

'Extremely critical'

In Greece the number of daily cases has doubled in the last two weeks to almost 3,000 and the government is facing accusations of "criminal negligence" by the opposition for its response to the crisis.

"The next few weeks will be extremely critical," Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis warned Thursday during a heated parliamentary debate.

The Greeks can no longer travel without authorization sent by SMS, and the government has moved up a notch with the imposition from Friday of a night curfew between 9 pm and 5 am.

Greece has seen 909 deaths and 63,000 infections among its population of 10.9 million, the vast majority in the past four months.

Particularly affected is Thessaloniki, the country's second largest city, where 32 percent of people have tested positive.

Ex-Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, head of Syriza, the main left-wing

opposition party, accused the government of taking too lax an approach to tourist arrivals but Mitsotakis blamed a relaxed attitude to social distancing and mask-wearing among young people.

"Some have undermined the health of the majority," he said.

- Santa's exemption—Elsewhere in Europe, Slovenia's government announced the suspension of public transport and a ban on nearly all public meetings and gatherings for the next two weeks.

And Portugal's [prime minister](#) said that a nighttime curfew that was already in place in parts of the country would now cover about 70 percent of the population as the number of COVID patients being treated in hospital was more than double the peak seen in the spring.

Serbia's health minister Zlatibor Loncar meanwhile cautioned that there were no more hospital beds available for virus patients in the capital Belgrade.

But Italy's prime minister struck a lighter note amid the gloom by telling the country's children that Santa Claus would skip lockdown by travelling the world with a special permit.

"Father Christmas assured me that he already has an international travel certificate: he can travel everywhere and distribute gifts to all the world's children," Giuseppe Conte wrote on Facebook.

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Citation: New York rolls out curbs as virus grips US, Europe (2020, November 13) retrieved 1 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-11-york-curbs-virus-europe.html>

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