

# France flags new restrictions in 'worsening' COVID situation

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France may need to impose new local restrictions to deal with a worsening COVID-19 situation as it scrambles to avoid a new national lockdown, a government spokesman said Wednesday.

Infections have reached worrying levels in several parts of the country,

spokesman Gabriel Attal told reporters after a weekly cabinet meeting.

The warning comes only days after the French Riviera was ordered into lockdown for the coming two weekends to contain COVID-19 which has been spreading faster in the tourist hotspot than elsewhere in France, and border controls were tightened.

Attal said similar moves could become necessary elsewhere because of "a worsening situation" that he said "requires rapid and strong measures".

Within hours of that warning, Health Minister Olivier Veran said that the northern coastal city of Dunkirk would also be locked down at weekends, until further notice, after the infection rate there went over 900 for 100,000 people, close to nine times the national average.

Like on the Riviera, the some 250,000 people in the city and surrounding area would be allowed to leave their homes only for specific authorised reasons, Veran said, calling Dunkirk's infection rate "alarming".

But the list could lengthen further: Around 10 of France's 102 territorial areas known as departments were now in a "very worrying situation", Attal said.

"We must continue all our efforts to avoid having to impose another national lockdown," he said.

There was "obviously" no certainty that such a drastic measure could be avoided, he said, warning that the government would not hesitate to order such a move if it was deemed necessary.

Prime Minister Jean Castex will host a news conference to update the

country on the COVID situation on Thursday, Attal said.

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