

New Jersey orders residents to stay at home over virus

21 March 2020

Covid-19 has claimed the lives of 278 Americans, with more than 22,000 confirmed cases in the United States, according to a running tally by Johns Hopkins University.

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New Jersey became the latest American state Saturday to order residents to stay at home in a bid to stem the spread of the deadly coronavirus.

Governor Phil Murphy said all gatherings were canceled and non-essential businesses "must indefinitely close their physical stores" from 9:00 PM (0100 GMT Sunday).

"I don't take this action lightly," said Murphy.

The executive order is similar to effective lockdowns mandated in several other US states, including California, New York, Illinois and Connecticut.

Murphy said "essential public health, safety, and social services will remain accessible," adding that grocery stores, food banks, pharmacies and gas stations would stay open.

Restaurants and bars are permitted to operate for take-out and delivery only, he added.

Around 30 percent of Americans are on various phases of virtual lockdown, including in the country's three biggest cities of New York, Los Angeles and Chicago.

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