



REOPENING NY



NEWSDAY / STEVE POST

A man works inside a closed minimart along Main Street in Patchogue.

Cuomo describes
phased-in approach
sometime after
May 15, likely
starting upstate

PLUS

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Inside Explore!

TRACKING THE  CORONAVIRUS

CUOMO WORKING ON

First carefully monitored phase-in likely to begin upstate after May 15

Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo on Sunday offered up a broad outline for reopening a state economy decimated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with New York's upstate region likely kicking off the first phase of a carefully monitored restart after May 15.

Cuomo said social distancing and his order shutting down many businesses statewide to slow the spread of the virus are working. Officials in Albany and different regions of the state are looking at incrementally reopening certain businesses, starting with construction and manufacturing — as long as key medical indicators continue to improve.

"No doubt, we've gone through the worst," Cuomo said at his daily coronavirus briefing in Albany, where he also told reporters that hospitalizations and deaths statewide from COVID-19 continue to drop.

"As long as we act prudently going forward," the governor said, "the worst should be over." Long Island business groups and county executives praised the governor's discussion about reopening segments of the economy.

"That's music to people's ears," said Eric Alexander, the organizer of the Long Island Main Street Alliance. Alexander said even a possible reopening timeline would be valuable to business owners.

"I think folks just want clarity of when" they can reopen, he said.

Medical experts cautioned reopening must be monitored carefully.

"I think Gov. Cuomo's plan is dipping a toe in the water to see what the impacts will be on the state," said Summer Johnson McGee, the dean of the school of health sciences at the University of New Haven in Connecticut. "It will be very interesting to see the results, and it will be a good test case as well to see if we can actually deploy adequate enough testing statewide to be able to keep the population safe."

New York's PAUSE order closing nonessential businesses expires May 15. After that, the first

This story was reported by **Rachelle Blidner, Jesse Coburn, Scott Eidler, Michael O'Keeffe, David Reich-Hale, David M. Schwartz** and **Dandan Zou**. It was written by Schwartz.

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Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo said Sunday that if New Yorkers remain

GOVERNOR'S PROPOSED REOPENING OF NEW YORK'S ECONOMY

Upstate regions likely to reopen first, then downstate; dependent on hospitalizations declining for 14 days, as well as results of antibody testing and positive tests for COVID-19.

PHASE ONE: Starts sometime after May 15. Construction and manufacturing businesses that operate with "low risk" of spreading the coronavirus can reopen, followed by a two-week assessment period.

PHASE TWO: Other businesses reopen depending on how essential the business is and how "risky" its operations are in terms of spreading the coronavirus. School reopening assessed.

— DAVID M. SCHWARTZ

reopening phase would likely start upstate, which has fewer infections, with construction and manufacturing where distancing is possible, Cuomo said.

After a two-week period to

watch hospitalizations and other indicators that measure the spread of infection, businesses in the next phase would be evaluated based on how essential they are and their ability to oper-

ate without increasing the spread, the governor said. He cited as an example the possibility that sports could be played without fans in attendance.

He called reopening New York City and Long Island "more complicated" than upstate regions.

"You can't do anything in New York City that you don't do in Suffolk, you don't do in Nassau, you don't do in Westchester," he said.

He added that won't mean "total consistency. But it means coordination."

School reopening would be assessed as the second phase proceeds. Some districts, he said, are discussing summer school to make up for lost time.

"Schools are necessary for a large-scale business reopen-

STATE'S GRADUAL RESTART



OFFICE OF GOV. ANDREW M. CUOMO

prudent, the worst of the coronavirus should be over.

ing. So you couldn't really get to a maximum phase two without opening schools," Cuomo said. "Do you reopen for the rest of the school year?"

Also under consideration, he said, is how to safely open beaches or public swimming pools as the weather heats up.

"We need summer activities in downstate New York," Cuomo said. "There's a sanity equation here also we have to take into consideration."

The governor said he'd look at three barometers to adjust the "dial" of reopening the economy: hospitalizations, antibody testing and positive tests for COVID-19. He agreed with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance that hospitalizations would have to decline for 14 consecu-

tive days before beginning to open up the economy.

Until there's a cure or vaccine, McGee said an increase of new cases will most likely follow once sections of the economy reopen, even though the spikes may not be as severe.

"The reality is, no matter what we do to open the economy, there is going to be a second wave," she said. "The question is, can we do enough things and put the measures in place to keep those tiny waves [or] keep them as ripples?"

Statewide, there were 367 COVID-19 deaths on Saturday, including 349 in hospitals and 18 in nursing homes, Cuomo announced. As of Saturday, 16,966 people had died. While there were slightly more than 1,000 new coronavirus cases, hospital-

izations continued to decline for the 13th straight day, according to state administration officials. The number of hospitalizations are "back where we were on March 31," Cuomo said.

Nassau County Executive Laura Curran said Sunday she is speaking to leaders of key industries — such as construction, home building, education and small business — "about how they're preparing for next steps."

Curran and Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone were appointed to the governor's new Reimagine New York Task Force, charged with taking a regional approach to rebuilding the state.

Curran said she has heard proposals for residential and other construction projects, and "that seems like a logical next step." She noted construction workers are "used to OSHA restrictions, all type of safety measures." The county, she added, is "just going to add some more, and it's going to provide much needed jobs."

Curran said another 29 Nassau residents have died from the virus, bringing the total to 1,587. COVID-19 hospitalizations in Nassau County fell for the 11th straight day.

In Suffolk, deaths rose by 28 to 1,070. The number of confirmed cases rose 637 to 32,822. Hospitalizations went down by 41 over the last 24 hours to 1,134, with 109 people discharged from the hospitals. ICU patients decreased by 10 to 443.

Northwell Health on Sunday said the number of COVID-19 patients at its 19 hospitals fell to 2,014. The New Hyde Park-based health system said it has seen a drop of more than 22% over the last six days.

Bellone said starting to phase reopening upstate "makes sense" considering that the region has had fewer coronavirus cases than downstate.

He said county officials are working on a reopening plan as well, including protective measures businesses can take to reopen. A working group is also analyzing whether and how to reopen beaches and parks.

Kevin Law, president of the Long Island Association, a regional business group, said: "I think Governor Cuomo is going about reopening the

economy the right way."

He said he appreciates that Cuomo is basing his plan on science and public health, "not the desire we all have to get back to normal."

Kyle Strober, executive director of the **Association for Better Long Island**, said, "While businesses are eager to reopen, the economy will not truly reopen until everyone feels safe to be

out in public again."

In New York City, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced an eight-member task force expected to deliver a preliminary report to him June 1 on what the city will look like once the pandemic passes. Among the goals of the task force, de Blasio said, is filling a gap in federal leadership about ways to begin recovery efforts once the pandemic ends.

Transmission rate key to state's reopening

BY SCOTT EIDLER
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New York State will have its eye on a new number, the rate of transmission, as officials determine to what degree the state should reopen.

The governor said Sunday at his daily coronavirus briefing that he will watch this number and simultaneously have his hand on the "activity valve," guiding policy across the state.

"All that progress we made, by flattening that curve, we could lose that in a matter of days if we're not careful," Cuomo said Sunday.

The rate is determined, primarily, by the hospitalization rate and total number of coronavirus diagnoses. A complex, regression model, relying on thousands of lines of code, is used to calculate the current rate.

A projection above one could result in a "spread," Jim Malatras, a member of the state's coronavirus task force, said in an interview Sunday.

A rate under one means that the virus is spreading to fewer and fewer people. The statewide figure is 0.8%, meaning 10 positive people are infecting about eight others. The current rate of transmission downstate, including Long Island, is 0.75%.

The key is to follow the projections and make sure the figure does not rise past 1.2, Cuomo said. Coronavirus is "highly, highly contagious,"

Malatras said, and the goal is to reduce the rate of transmission.

The state follows several models and projections, including one from the Imperial College at London. Antibody tests have yet to be incorporated into the model, Malatras said. State sampling at groceries is still ongoing. Testing occurred on Long Island over the weekend.

If one person infects two people, who each then infects two more people, there's a ratio of more than 1. "That's fire through dry grass... now you're in bad shape," Cuomo said Sunday. "We were actually there before we even knew we were there."

At a rate of 1.0, "one person infects one other person, you can't really go beyond that margin." The current rate of 0.8% across the state, "is good news. At that rate, you the virus declining," he said.

Cuomo said he will take the activities and watch the dials — hospitalizations, number of positive antibody tests, and number of positive diagnostic tests. "You open the valve a little bit, phase one, watch those dials like a hawk, and then you adjust," he said.

"This is the balance that we collectively need to strike," he said. "I want to get back to work, my kids want out of the house. I need to do something. I understand, we have to do it intelligently. This is the definition of intelligence in this context."