

# COVID-19 Daily Update

April 17, 2020

## Summary

The United States has 679,374 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 34,575 reported related deaths. China raised its reported COVID-19 death toll by 50 percent in Wuhan, the city where the outbreak first started. The figure reflects 1,290 additional deaths, bringing the total reported death count to 3,869. Many have criticized China for mismanaging and concealing the extent of the epidemic in Wuhan and elsewhere in China. President Trump issued guidelines to assist state and local officials to gradually reopen state economies in three phases. The guidelines do not include a plan for increased testing or addressing a surge in cases; rather, they indicate that states are responsible for establishing testing sites and contact tracing capabilities, and that states should ensure they are able “to quickly and independently supply sufficient Personal Protective Equipment and critical medical equipment to handle dramatic surge in need.”

Some states, including Florida, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Idaho, announced plans to reopen certain businesses on May 1. Public health experts warn against premature decisions to ease social distancing guidelines and fear that the country lacks sufficient diagnostic testing and contact-tracing capabilities to counter the risks of reopening. The PGA Tour announced it would resume its season in mid-June with a tournament in Texas, which would most likely make men's golf among the first major American professional sports to restart competition. The tournament will be played without spectators.

New York State reports 630 virus-related deaths, pushing the State's official death toll to 12,822. Although the number of hospitalizations and intubations decreased, hospitals are still admitting 2,000 new infected patients every day. Governor Cuomo directed all New Yorkers to wear face coverings on public transportation systems and while riding in for-hire vehicles. These directives expand upon the Governor's earlier executive order requiring all New Yorkers to wear face coverings in public where proper social distance cannot be maintained. New York City's public transportation system reports facing \$8.5 billion in losses. Ridership declined 95% on the subway and commuter lines. These two revenue streams make up 86% of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (MTA) operating budget. MTA seeks \$3.9 billion in federal aid, on top of the \$3.8 billion it received last month. New York City canceled all events requiring permits for May, including the Brooklyn Half Marathon and concerts in Central Park.

## General/Employer Guidance

### Presidential updates

- [President Donald J. Trump Announces Guidelines for Opening Up America Again](#), April 16
  - President Trump announced guidelines to assist state and local officials to gradually reopen state economies in three phases.
  - According to the guidelines, states should satisfy certain “gating criteria” before proceeding to a phased reopening. There should be a downward trajectory of documented cases or of percentage of positive tests within a 14-day period. Hospitals should be able to treat all patients without crisis care and have a robust testing program in place for at-risk health care workers. States should experience a 14-day downward trajectory of influenza-like illnesses.
  - Once the “gating criteria” are satisfied, there are three recommended phases of easing restrictions. The guidelines recommend that states pass certain markers in testing and surveillance data over the prior 14 days before advancing from one phase to another.
    - **Phase One:** Phase one recommends strict social distancing for all people in public. During this phase, non-essential travel is discouraged and gatherings larger than 10 people are prohibited; employers should continue to encourage telework and, if possible, employees may return to work in phases; schools should remain closed; and movie theaters and places of worship can operate under strict physical distancing protocols.
    - **Phase Two:** Phase two encourages people to maximize social distancing and limit gatherings to no more than 50 people, unless precautionary measures are taken. During this phase, non-essential travel may resume; employers should continue to encourage telework and consider special accommodations for personnel in vulnerable populations; schools can reopen; and bars may operate with diminished standing-room occupancy.
    - **Phase Three:** Phase three envisions a return to normalcy, with a focus on identification and isolation of any new infections. During this phase, those most susceptible to the respiratory disease are advised to remain sheltered in place until their area enters the final phase — and even then are encouraged to take precautions to avoid close contact with other people. Employers may resume unrestricted staffing of worksites.
  - The guidance further provides “core state preparedness responsibilities,” which include establishing testing sites and an ability to contact trace, as well as ensuring the “[a]bility to quickly and independently supply sufficient Personal Protective Equipment and critical medical equipment to handle dramatic surge in need.”
- [Remarks by President Trump, Vice President Pence, and Members of the Coronavirus Task Force in Press Briefing](#), April 16
  - President Trump described new federal guidance for reopening the economy as a “phased and deliberative approach.” The guidance was developed by “top medical experts” from across the government. Trump announced that certain states could almost immediately begin the steps laid out in Phase One.
  - Trump [briefed](#) governors on the guidelines and asserted that governors would “call their own shots” and decide when it is safe to lift restrictions in their states. The President stated that the federal government would “stand alongside” the governors.
- [President Trump Convenes Members of Congress to Serve on the Opening Up America Again Congressional Group](#), April 16
  - President Trump announced the creation of the “Opening Up America Again Congressional Group,” an advisory panel of Congressional members to advise on measures to ease social distancing guidelines. The panel includes 64 senators and 32 congressmen.

- The panel recently discussed the need for additional funding for the Paycheck Protection Program, international and domestic supply chains, medical billing, the need to clarify the difference between essential and non-essential workers, and relief for small businesses.

### **World Health Organization (WHO)**

- [COVID-19 Situation Report – 87](#), April 16
  - WHO estimates that 20% of COVID-19 patients require oxygen therapy treatment. WHO highlights the importance of increasing oxygen therapy capacity and published [guidance](#) on how to surge oxygen systems and distribution.
  - WHO Europe Regional Director Kluge issued a [statement](#) urging that any transition to a “new normal” must be guided by public health principles and ensure that transmission is controlled, hospitals have sufficient testing and contact tracing capabilities, and outbreak risks are minimized in high-vulnerability settings such as nursing homes.
  - The number of COVID-19 cases has [declined](#) in Spain, Italy, Germany and France, but there is increased transmission in the UK, Turkey, and Russia.

### **U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**

- [Recent Statements by CDC Director Redfield](#), April 17
  - CDC Director Redfield asserted that “it’s important not to let up at all” as parts of the U.S. seek to reopen. CDC recommends that areas with significant ongoing transmission, such as New York, Boston, Baltimore, and Washington D.C., continue to follow federal mitigation strategies.

### **New York State**

- [New York State records 630 more official deaths](#), April 17
  - New York State reports 630 virus-related deaths, pushing the State’s official death toll to 12,822. Although the number of hospitalizations and intubations has decreased, hospitals are still admitting around 2,000 new infected patients every day.
  - Governor Cuomo emphasized the need for federal aid and warned that the State faces a “terrible” budget deficit. The State will not fully reopen without more widespread testing capabilities, which would require supplies and an operational capacity that the health system does not currently have.
- [Governor Cuomo Outlines Blueprint to Un-PAUSE New York](#), April 16
  - The Governor announced a “blueprint” to ease social distancing guidelines in New York. The State urges businesses to consider the following precautions: ensuring employees have means for safe transport (i.e. masks for public transport) or requiring telecommuting; implementing office-wide social distancing measures (i.e. desks are six feet apart); ensuring minimal contact with customers; and enacting protocols should an employee test positive for COVID-19.
  - Governor Cuomo directed all New Yorkers to wear face coverings on public transportation systems and while riding in for-hire vehicles. All operators of public and private transportation systems must wear masks while working. These directives expand upon the Governor’s earlier executive order requiring all New Yorkers to wear face coverings in public where proper social distance cannot be maintained.
- [Suspension of New York State Debt Collection in Response to Coronavirus](#), April 16
  - New York State halted the collection of medical and student debt owed to the State of New York that was specifically referred to the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) for collection. A new executive order extended the suspension for another 30-day period until May 17. OAG will then reassess whether another extension is necessary.

- More than 165,000 matters fit the criteria for a suspension of state debt collection, including patients that owe medical debt to state hospitals, students that owe debt to State University of New York (SUNY) campuses, and other fees owed to State agencies. The temporary policy also suspended the accrual of interest and the collection of fees.
- [\*Attorney General James Issues Tenant Guidance for New Yorkers During Pandemic\*](#), April 16
  - New York Attorney General James issued guidance on tenants' rights during the pandemic.
  - All evictions across New York State are suspended until June 19; courts are not accepting any new eviction or foreclosure cases. Landlords cannot participate in "rent gouging," by increasing rent in order to capitalize on the crisis. Landlords cannot discriminate against or evict a tenant because the tenant, or someone the tenant lives with, has contracted or had COVID-19, or the landlord thinks that the tenant has or had COVID-19.

### **New York City**

- [\*New York City COVID-19 Immigrant Emergency Relief Program\*](#), April 16
  - Mayor de Blasio announced the creation of the New York City COVID-19 Immigrant Emergency Relief program to provide emergency monetary relief to immigrant workers and their families.
  - New York City is home to 3.1 million immigrants who comprise about 37% of the City's population and 44 percent of its workforce— including approximately 360,000 undocumented workers and 48,000 undocumented business owners.
  - The City will distribute one-time emergency relief payments to 20,000 undocumented workers and their families in the amount of \$400 for individuals, \$800 for couples or a single parent with children, and \$1,000 for a family with multiple adults and children. The program will also assist such individuals with unemployment, SNAP, and emergency food delivery programs.
- [\*Mayor De Blasio Requests Assistance from HHS Secretary and President Trump\*](#), April 16
  - Mayor de Blasio wrote a [letter](#) to Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to request that the HHS revise the distribution methodology for the health care provider relief fund in the CARES Act. The fund is currently distributed based on Medicare fee-for-service (FFS) payments. The City asked for HHS to implement an allocation method that takes into account the volume of reported COVID-19 cases and Medicaid and uninsured utilization among the population.
  - Mayor de Blasio wrote a [letter](#) to President Trump to ask him to issue a waiver to FEMA's Major Disaster Declaration to increase the federal share of emergency work performed in New York City to 100%. Under the current declaration, New York has a 75% federal to 25% state cost share for eligible expenses and activities. Waivers have been granted for prior disasters, including Superstorm Sandy and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

### **Other Related Updates**

- [\*Clinical Characteristics of Covid-19 in New York City\*](#), April 17
  - A recent study, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, examined 393 COVID-19 patients admitted to two hospitals in New York City.
  - Patients who received invasive mechanical ventilation were more likely to be male, to have obesity, and to have elevated liver-function values and inflammatory markers than were patients who did not receive invasive mechanical ventilation.
  - Deterioration occurred in many patients whose condition had previously been stable; almost a third of patients who received invasive mechanical ventilation did not need supplemental oxygen during the first three hours after presenting to the emergency department.

- [NIH to launch public-private partnership for COVID-19 vaccine and treatment options](#), April 17
  - National Institutes of Health (NIH) is partnering with leading biopharmaceutical companies, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Health and Human Services (HHS) office to create a coordinated research response to COVID-19.
  - The planned Accelerating COVID-19 Therapeutic Interventions and Vaccines (ACTIV) partnership will develop a collaborative framework for prioritizing vaccine and drug candidates, streamlining clinical trials, coordinating regulatory processes and leveraging assets among all partners.
  
- [Department of Labor COVID-19 Updated Guidance](#), April 16
  - Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recognizes that some employers may face difficulties complying with OSHA standards during the pandemic due to widespread business closures, facility visitor problems, and stay-at-home orders.
  - OSHA issued [interim guidance](#) to advise its Compliance and Safety Officers (CSHOs) to consider whether employers made a good faith effort to comply with safety and health standards in determining whether to cite a violation.
  - OSHA issued an alert listing [safety tips](#) employers can follow to help protect manufacturing workers from exposure to coronavirus.
  
- [HHS Announces Ventilator Contract with GE Under Defense Production Act](#), April 16
  - The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) awarded a new contract for ventilator production under the Defense Production Act (DPA) to General Electric and Ford. The contract is for 50,000 ventilators to be produced by July 13, for a total price of \$336 million.
  - Combined with contracts announced this [month](#), HHS has finalized contracts to produce or acquire more than 41,000 ventilators by the end of May, and over 187,000 ventilators by the end of the year.
  
- [FDA COVID-19 Update: Daily Roundup](#), April 16
  - FDA launched a new [webpage](#) guiding recovered COVID-19 patients to local blood collection centers to discuss their eligibility to donate convalescent plasma.
  - FDA issued [warning letters](#) to two companies which distribute chloroquine phosphate products intended to treat disease in aquarium fish. FDA is concerned that consumers may mistake unapproved chloroquine phosphate animal drugs for the human drug chloroquine phosphate, which is currently under study as a potential treatment for COVID-19.
  - FDA posted [tips](#) for shopping for food during the pandemic. FDA recommends buying one to two weeks-worth of groceries at a time to avoid temporary food shortages.
  - FDA issued [guidance](#) to help expand the availability of telethermographic systems used for body temperature measurements for triage use. FDA supports use of these systems in high throughput areas (such as airports, businesses, warehouses, and factories) and in settings where other temperature assessment products may be in short supply.
  - FDA [announced](#) the development of fully synthetic Q-tip swabs for compatibility with COVID-19 testing. U.S. Cotton plans to produce these new polyester swabs in large quantities to help meet the needs for coronavirus diagnostic testing.
  
- [TSA tips for flying during the coronavirus pandemic](#), April 15
  - The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) provided recommendations for traveling during the pandemic.
  - TSA is currently allowing one liquid hand sanitizer container, up to 12 ounces per passenger, in carry-on bags until further notice. Travelers are permitted to bring individually-packaged alcohol or anti-bacterial wipes in carry-on or checked luggage. TSA will accept driver's licenses or

state-issued IDs which expired on or after March 1, 2020 as acceptable identification. Travelers are allowed to wear masks during the security screening process.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [France's Anti-Corruption Agency Publishes Guidance on Its Enforcement Activity During COVID-19 Crisis](#), April 17
- [Public Health & Social Services Emergency Fund Implementation Guidelines](#), April 16
- [Recent Developments in Credit Funds Secondaries: Has the COVID-19 Pandemic Introduced New Opportunities?](#), April 15

Send questions to [COVID-19-Implications@ropesgray.com](mailto:COVID-19-Implications@ropesgray.com)