



COVID-19 Daily Update

Thursday, March 12, 2020

Summary

Today, New York City declared a state of emergency and new details and clarification of the orders discussed in President Trump's COVID-19 address emerged. Notably, the new 30-day travel ban suspends the entry of most foreign nationals who have been in Schengen Area countries (26 European countries) at any point during the 14 days prior to their scheduled arrival to the United States. It does not apply to U.K. and Ireland, or to US citizens, lawful permanent residents, or close family of either group. In addition, the FDA and White House both provided interim guidance addressing anticipated shortages of personal protective equipment used by healthcare providers. Locally, Governor Cuomo announced that the SUNY and CUNY systems are implementing plans for distance learning for the remainder of the Spring semester.

General/Employer Guidance

President's comments

- Remarks by President Trump in Address to the Nation Clarified, March 12, 2020
 - On Wednesday evening, President Trump addressed the nation sharing information on the coronavirus threat and the administration's proposed response. New details of the orders discussed by President Trump are now available and clarify his earlier statements.
 - Travel Ban: According to the Department of Homeland Security, the Presidential Proclamation suspends the entry of most foreign nationals who have been in Schengen Area (26 European States) countries at any point during the 14 days prior to their scheduled arrival to the United States. This measure does not apply to U.K. and Ireland, or to U.S. citizens, legal permanent residents, and the immediate family members of U.S. citizens or permanent resident.
 - Healthcare Measures: Clarifications note that major U.S. insurance companies have agreed to waive copays for coronavirus testing, but not for disease treatment.
 - Financial Measures: The President also referenced measures contained in the recently signed Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2020. This provided \$8.3 billion to the FDA to respond to the coronavirus, and funded a Disaster Loan Program with \$20 billion. It also provided additional funding to the CDC and NIH to support COVID-19 related measures.

World Health Organization (WHO)

- WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the Mission briefing on COVID-19, March 12, 2020
 - WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus briefed WHO Member States on COVID-19 and the organization's decision to characterize the coronavirus as a pandemic. Tedros explained the two main reasons for the WHO's decision. First, he highlighted the speed and scale of disease transmission. Second, he highlighted the lack of political commitment in some countries to control it, despite frequent warnings.
 - Tedros stressed that this is a controllable pandemic, and that countries should still prioritize containment measures over mitigation measures, by finding and isolating as many cases as possible and quarantining their closest contacts. The WHO noted that countries that decide to give up on fundamental public health measures may end up with a larger problem, and a heavier burden on the health system that requires more severe measures to control.
- Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) Situation Report – 51, March 11, 2020
 - According to the WHO, four new territories have reported cases of COVID-19 in the past 24 hours, including Bolivia, Jamaica, Burkina Faso, and Democratic Republic of the Congo. Globally, the report notes 118,332 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 4,292 reported deaths.
 - WHO stressed that while the virus infects people of all ages, evidence suggests that two groups of people are at a higher risk of getting severe COVID-19 disease. These are older people (people over 60 years old); and those with underlying medical conditions (such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer). WHO urged these groups to take additional precautions, like asking all visitors to wash their hands, limiting shared spaces in the home, and making a plan in preparation for a COVID-19 outbreak in their community.

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

- Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Update—Information for Clinicians Caring for Children and Pregnant Women, March 12, 2020
 - The CDC provided updated guidance on COVID-19 as it relates to children and pregnant women. This guidance focuses on infection prevention and control measures in inpatient obstetric healthcare settings, as well as resources available to care for pediatric patients.
 - This guidance notes that pregnant women experience immunologic and physiologic changes which might make them more susceptible to viral respiratory infections, including COVID-19. It also touches on recommended pre-hospital measures, as well as steps to take during hospitalization – as it is unknown whether newborns with COVID-19 are at increased risk for severe complications.
- Transcript - CDC Media Telebriefing: Update on COVID-19, March 10, 2020
 - The director of the CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, Nancy Messonnier, recently commented on the CDC's COVID-19

response. Messionier noted that the virus is “highly contagious” and explained that there is no immunity against the virus in our human population. She highlighted that many people in the United States will – at some point in time – be exposed to this virus, and that there is a good chance many will become sick.

- Still, the CDC emphasized that just because many people will be exposed to the virus, most won't get seriously ill or die from it. Based on numbers from China, about 80% of COVID-19 cases are mild, and the 15% to 20% of cases that lead to serious illness seem not to include children.

New York State

- *During Novel Coronavirus Briefing, Governor Cuomo Announces New York State Will Contract with 28 Private Labs to Increase Coronavirus Testing Capacity*, March 11, 2020
 - Governor Andrew Cuomo announced several measures New York State plans to take to mitigate the economic impact of the coronavirus. This includes new state contracts with 28 private lab facilities to increase virus-testing capacity, and two full weeks of paid leave for all state workers (regardless of civil service classification) subject to a quarantine order.
 - In addition to these programs, the Governor announced that the SUNY and CUNY systems are implementing plans for distance learning for the remainder of the Spring semester. The New York State Department of Health will grant \$200,000 to a local food bank in New Rochelle to ensure students continue to access free school lunches in the containment zone.
- *Governor Cuomo Announces St. Patrick's Day Parade and Celebration Committee Has Agreed to Postpone 2020 St. Patrick's Day Parade*, March 11, 2020
 - Governor Andrew Cuomo announced the St. Patrick's Day Parade and Celebration Committee has agreed to postpone the 2020 St. Patrick's Day Parade, which draws approximately 250,000 marchers and 1 to 2 million spectators to Manhattan. The Governor rested his decision on the advice of public health experts, who agree that one of the most effective ways to contain the spread of the virus is to limit large gatherings and close contacts. The parade will be held at a later date.

New York City

- *Mayor Di Blasio declared a state of emergency*, March 12, 2020
 - Mayor Bill de Blasio declared a state of emergency in New York City and announced restrictions on public gatherings of more than 500 people. This rule will take effect at 5 p.m. on Thursday for Broadway theaters and will go into effect for other venues on Friday at 5 p.m.
 - Given these new restrictions, all Broadway theaters will go dark for at least a month, suspending their performances through April 12. Small gatherings are still permitted, but venues that hold fewer than 500 people are required to reduce their occupancy by half. Schools, hospitals, nursing homes and public transit will be exempt from the guidelines.

- The announcement comes just hours after other cultural institutions including the Metropolitan Museum, the Metropolitan Opera and Carnegie Hall announced that they would be suspending visits and performances.
- *N.Y.C. Will Introduce ‘More Restrictions’ as Number of Cases Rises to 62: Live Updates, March 12, 2020*
 - As of Thursday morning, New York City had 62 confirmed cases of the coronavirus. In a recent media interview, Mayor Bill de Blasio stated that New York City could soon introduce “more restrictions” to contain the spread of the coronavirus. He specifically mentioned Broadway, where producers have taken step to remain open.
 - De Blasio said he did not plan to shut down the subway system or close all of the city’s public schools, but he did not provide more detailed information. Starting Friday, all events and public programming at New York City public libraries have been canceled. For now, library branches remain open.

Other Related Updates

- *Memorandum on Making General Use Respirators Available, March 11, 2020*
 - The White House issued an official presidential memoranda on the anticipated shortages of personal respiratory devices available for use by healthcare workers in mitigating further transmission of COVID-19. The President ordered the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Labor to facilitate the availability and emergency use of respirators by healthcare personnel.
- *Surgical Mask and Gown Conservation Strategies - Letter to Healthcare Providers, March 11, 2020*
 - Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued guidance to healthcare providers, addressing the need for personal protective equipment, like surgical masks and isolation gowns, in fighting the COVID-19 outbreak. Noting that the need for such equipment may outpace the supply, the FDA issued three separate recommendations based on supply levels.
 - Where supply levels are adequate to provide patient care, providers are encouraged to use FDA-cleared supplies in accordance with labeling and local, state, and federal requirements. Where, however, limited supplies are available, providers are urged to take alternative measures – like using surgical masks beyond the manufacturer-designated shelf life and even re-using masks where appropriate. According to the FDA, gowns and masks should also be prioritized by the type of activities performed during use, like aerosol-generating procedures or high-contact patient care.
- *How long can the new coronavirus last on surfaces?, March 11, 2020*
 - A new study suggests that COVID-19 can remain in the air for up to three hours, and live on surfaces for up to three days. Specifically, it notes that the virus can remain viable on copper for up to 4 hours, on cardboard for up to 24 hours, and on plastic and stainless steel for up to 2 to 3 days. The study concludes that its “results indicate that aerosol transmission of HCoV-19 is plausible.”

- The study has not yet been peer-reviewed, but its results are consistent with another study published in February in the Journal of Hospital Infection which analyzed several dozen previously published papers on human coronaviruses and their survival outside the body.
- According to the CDC, the virus is most likely to spread from person to person through close contact and respiratory droplets from coughs and sneezes that can land on a nearby person's mouth or nose, according to the CDC.
- Testing in the US, March 11, 2020
 - According to the CDC, all US states and territories have one or more laboratories currently testing for COVID-19.
 - However, as noted in the chart below—which relies on data collected as of 4:00 pm on March 10—the number of tests per day appears to remain low.

