

COVID-19 Daily Update

March 30, 2020

Summary

President Trump extended federal guidance on social distancing through the end of April. The guidance urges Americans to stay at home and bans gathering in groups of more than 10 people. Government models suggest that, even with aggressive measures in place to slow the spread of the virus, as many as 200,000 Americans could die during the outbreak. Without any precautionary measures, the same models project that 1.6 million to 2.2 million Americans could die from complications of the virus. Dr. Deborah Birx, White House coronavirus response coordinator, recently cautioned that “no state, no metro area, will be spared.” The United States currently has 144,672 confirmed cases and 2,600 coronavirus deaths.

New York State reports nearly 66,500 COVID-19 cases. Most of the cases are in New York City, where 36,221 people have tested positive. The USNS Comfort, a Navy hospital ship with 1,000 beds, arrived in New York harbor Monday and could be ready to accept patients as soon as Tuesday. Mount Sinai is constructing a 68-bed field hospital in Central Park’s East Meadow. New York City Mayor de Blasio called on the federal government to help provide critical equipment to the city’s overstretched hospital system, warning that current stocks will be exhausted by next Sunday, April 5.

Amazon employees at a New York City warehouse went on strike Monday afternoon, demanding better pay and protections against COVID-19. Employees at the Staten Island fulfillment center will strike until the building is sanitized in the wake of several workers having tested positive for the coronavirus. More than 150,000 drivers and shoppers for the online grocery service Instacart are also planning a national strike on Monday, which they say will continue until the company offers an additional \$5 per order in hazard pay, the provision of supplies like cleansing wipes, and expanded pay for those affected by the coronavirus. Whole Foods workers are also planning a nationwide mass “sickout” on Tuesday, demanding the company meet a series of safety demands. Macy’s, which also owns Bloomingdale’s and Bluemercury, announced that it plans to furlough the majority of its employees, 130,000 workers, this week.

General/Employer Guidance

Presidential updates

- [*Trump says he’s sending ventilators directly to hospitals battling coronavirus*](#), March 30
 - In a recent interview, President Trump blamed the State of New York for its ventilator shortage and claimed that the state was misusing the machines. He stated that, “I think New York should

be fine based on the numbers that we see. They should have more than enough [ventilators].” He expressed concern that many ventilators are not being used properly or used at all. The President suggested that he is still acquiring additional ventilators but added that that “after this is over they’ll be selling ventilators for a dollar a piece, we’ll have a lot of them.”

- [Remarks by President Trump, Vice President Pence, and Members of the Coronavirus Task Force in Press Briefing](#), March 29
 - Government models suggest that, even with aggressive measures in place to slow the spread of the virus, as many as 200,000 Americans could die during the outbreak. Without any precautionary measures, the same models project that 1.6 million to 2.2 million Americans could die from complications of the virus.
 - President Trump extended the federal government’s guidelines for social distancing until April 30. The guidelines urge people to stay at home and not gather in groups of more than 10. The President expects the COVID-19 death rate to peak in two weeks from now.
 - White House officials noted that making rapid testing more accessible, providing results in minutes, would be key in determining when it is safe to open schools and businesses and ease social distancing rules.
 - A commercial aircraft carrying gloves, masks, gowns and other medical supplies from Shanghai arrived in New York, the first of 22 scheduled flights in a public-private partnership with health care distributors. FEMA will provide the majority of the supplies to New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, with the rest going to nursing homes in the area and other high-risk areas across the country.
 - Two of the nation’s largest health insurers, Cigna and Humana, agreed to protect their customers from out-of-pocket costs if they need treatment for COVID-19. Last week, another large insurer, Aetna, now part of CVS Health, said it would also waive cost-sharing related to hospital stays.
- [Letter from the Vice President to Hospital Administrators](#), March 29
 - The White House Coronavirus Task Force issued a letter to hospital administrators to request assistance with data for epidemiological surveillance and public health decisions. The letter requests that all hospitals report data on COVID-19 testing performed in in-house laboratories. All reports are due to FEMA by 5 PM every day. Hospitals are also urged to report data to the National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN) module, monitored by CDC. All data provided by hospitals will be maintained according to the Privacy Act.
- [President Donald J. Trump Approves Major Disaster Declarations](#), March 29
 - President Trump declared that a major disaster exists in the District of Columbia, Kansas, and Alabama. He ordered Federal assistance to supplement state, and local recovery efforts in the areas affected by COVID-19. The action makes Federal funding available for crisis counseling for affected individuals in the State, and for other emergency protective measures.
 - President Trump recently issued similar declarations for New York, California, Washington State, Louisiana, Iowa, Texas, Florida, New Jersey, Illinois, Missouri, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Oregon, Connecticut, Colorado, South Carolina, Kentucky, Georgia, Puerto Rico, and Guam.

World Health Organization (WHO)

- [WHO Director-General’s opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19](#), March 30
 - WHO Director-General Tedros recently highlighted the increasing demand on health facilities and health workers, leaving some health systems overstretched and unable to operate effectively. WHO urged facilities to continue providing essential health services, including

routine vaccination, pregnancy care, and treatment for other diseases. WHO [guidance](#) recommends targeted immediate actions that countries should consider to maintain access to essential health services.

- WHO noted that early research in non-randomized studies and observational studies indicate that some drugs “may have an impact” on COVID-19, but the data are extremely preliminary. Some drugs may affect the length or severity of the disease, but WHO cautions that large-scale clinical trials are needed to determine whether drugs are truly effective.
- [Coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Situation Report – 69](#), March 29
 - WHO reports that one new country, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, has reported cases of COVID-19.
 - WHO European Region published an [article](#) on mental health and psychological resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. It highlights the potential mental health impact of COVID-19 on children and the elderly.

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

- [COVID-19 Travel Recommendations by Country](#), March 30
 - CDC recommends that travelers avoid nonessential travel to all global destinations. CDC warns that widespread ongoing transmission of COVID-19 is occurring globally and that individuals may be exposed to the virus while traveling. U.S. residents may have difficulty returning to the United States. Many countries are implementing travel restrictions and mandatory quarantines, closing borders, and prohibiting non-citizens from entry with little advance notice. Airlines have cancelled many international flights, and in-country travel may be unpredictable.
 - CDC further notes that there may be limited access to adequate medical care in affected areas, as some health care systems are overwhelmed. The Department of State also advises that in countries where commercial travel options remain available, U.S. citizens should arrange for immediate return to the United States unless they are prepared to remain abroad for an indefinite length of time.

New York State

- [Cuomo Says Worst Is to Come as Coronavirus Deaths Top 1,200](#), March 30
 - In a recent press briefing, Governor Andrew Cuomo said that the worst of the coronavirus outbreak was yet to come, even as another 253 people died in the state in a 24-hour period. New York reports nearly 66,500 COVID-19 cases. Most of the cases are in New York City, where 36,221 people have tested positive. The number of people hospitalized is 9,517, up 12 percent from yesterday. Of those, 2,352 are in ventilator-equipped intensive care rooms. More than 4,200 people have been discharged from hospitals.
 - New York has tested more than 186,000 people in March, about one percent of the state’s population. But while New York’s testing capacity far outpaces that of other states, it has not reached the critical-mass level public health experts say is necessary to identify more precisely the spread of the virus.
- [New COVID-19 Mobile Testing Site for the Northeast Bronx](#), March 29
 - Governor Cuomo announced a new COVID-19 mobile testing site in the Northeast Bronx. The site will prioritize tests for individuals that are among the highest risk population. Residents who would like to be tested must make an appointment and must be in a vehicle. The center is slated to be operational on Monday, March 30, 2020 at 10 AM.

New York City

- [Mayor de Blasio Holds Media Availability on COVID-19](#), March 29
 - Mayor de Blasio called on the federal government to help provide critical equipment to the city's overstretched hospital system, warning that current stocks will be exhausted by next Sunday, April 5.
 - Mount Sinai Health is constructing a 68-bed field hospital in Central Park's East Meadow. The site will begin accepting patients on Tuesday, March 31. The hospital will not be a standalone walk-in facility, and Mt. Sinai will manage admissions and transfers.
 - The City has continued to surge resources to NYC Health+ Hospitals Elmhurst to accommodate the influx of patients with COVID-19 related illness. NYC Health + Hospitals added 169 clinicians to assist Elmhurst staff, including registered nurses, nurse practitioners, and physicians.
 - Beginning on Monday, NYPD will conduct spot checks on subway cars to ensure individuals are following social distancing guidelines. The Staten Island Ferry will further reduce its frequency and will transition to hourly service.
 - The Parks Department and NYPD continue to enforce social distancing guidelines at Parks and issue fines as necessary. As team sports are banned, the City plans to remove nets from any tennis court or soccer field with significant enforcement issues.

Other Related Updates

- [Coronavirus Fears Spur Workers to Strike](#), March 30
 - [Amazon](#) employees at a New York City warehouse walked off the job and went on strike on Monday afternoon, demanding better pay and protections against COVID-19. Employees at the Staten Island fulfillment center will strike until the building is sanitized in the wake of several workers testing positive for the coronavirus.
 - More than 150,000 drivers and shoppers for the online grocery service [Instacart](#) are also planning a national strike on Monday, which they say will continue until the company offers an additional \$5 per order in hazard pay, the provision of supplies like cleansing wipes, and expanded pay for those affected by the coronavirus.
 - [Whole Foods](#) workers are also planning a nationwide mass "sickout" on Tuesday, demanding the company meet a series of safety demands. Among the Whole Foods workers' demands are guaranteed paid leave for employees who isolate or self-quarantine instead of coming to work; reinstatement of health care coverage for part-time and seasonal workers; hazard pay for coming to work; and the implementation of policies to facilitate social distancing between workers and customers.
- [FDA on Signing of the COVID-19 Emergency Relief Bill](#), March 30
 - FDA issued a press release highlighting specific portions of the \$2 trillion emergency relief bill that was signed into law on Friday. The legislation provided an additional \$80 million in funding for FDA COVID-19 response efforts including the development of medical countermeasures and vaccines, promoting the advanced manufacturing of medical products, and monitoring of the medical product supply chain.
 - The law also granted FDA new authority to change its over-the-counter (OTC) drug development and review process. FDA plans to utilize this flexibility to improve the safety and effectiveness of OTC drugs needed in the COVID-19 crisis, like hand sanitizer and acetaminophen.
- [HHS accepts donations of medicine to Strategic National Stockpile](#), March 29
 - The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) accepted 30 million doses of hydroxychloroquine sulfate donated by Sandoz, and one million doses of chloroquine

phosphate donated by Bayer Pharmaceuticals, for possible use in treating patients hospitalized with COVID-19 or for use in clinical trials.

- Use of the donated medications is expected to help ease supply pressures for the drug. FDA is also working with manufacturers of chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine to increase production to ensure these drugs also remain available for patients dependent on them for treatment of malaria, lupus and rheumatoid arthritis.

Send questions to COVID-19-Implications@ropesgray.com