

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: August 5th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon. In particular for my colleagues up here, I feel like I am caught in Shakespeare's comedy, *Twelfth Night*. I quote Shakespeare, "For the rain, it raineth every day." I know we are moving forward to better days.

With me is the woman on my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. To her right, the Department of Health's Communicable Disease Service Medical Director, another familiar face, Dr. Ed Lifshitz; great to have you both. To my far left, State Police Superintendent, Colonel Pat Callahan. We have Jared Maples, Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness. To my immediate left, not surprisingly, we have with us today as a guest present on the Board of Public Utilities, Joe Fiordaliso. Joe, great to have you.

Yesterday the tropical storm, Isaias, swept across the state with high winds and lashing rains. As I mentioned on several interviews and conversations, the legacy of this storm is going to be power outages. At the storm's height, roughly 1.4 million households went without power. As of now, Joe, I've got approximately 977,000 still waiting for restoration. This morning I toured storm damaged areas of Jackson Township with other leaders; Senator Sam Thompson, a dear friend; Ocean County Freeholder Director Joe Vicari, with whom I actually had spoken yesterday, another great leader; and Jackson Mayor and friend, Michael Reina. We were also with JCP&L's President Jim Fakult.

I asked Joe to join us today to speak to the BPU's ongoing monitoring of the efforts of our electric suppliers to restore power. For some residents, we know that restoration may take some time, counting in days instead of hours. I've been back and forth with mayors, county officials, electric service, CEOs, and many others over



the past now 72 hours.

One example of a community that's still digging out this morning I was back and forth with, Mayor Rick Lomonaco of Allamuchy Township in Warren County. Rick said to me this morning that 90% of his community is without power, just to give you one example. We urge everyone's patience as crews are working as quickly as possible. Remember, many crews could not get out into the field. Joe always reminds us of this – they wanted to yesterday – because the storm sustained winds that made it hazardous for them to do so. You couldn't envision women and me up on those buckets working in wind gusts of 50, 60, 70 miles an hour.

We also know that there are out-of-state crews both already in New Jersey and on their way to New Jersey to provide additional assistance and, as always, we are grateful to them as they travel. It also raises another challenge, and that is we are fighting a pandemic, Judy. The notion of essential out-of-state travel we have to allow for. God knows this is essential, but with that as part of our discussion with the electric service is what do you do in a cohort? What are the protocols, etc.? As they say, if it isn't one thing, it's another. I'll ask Joe to give a fuller briefing on all of this in a few moments.

Let me just say this; as always, if you see a downed wire or a downed tree or branch, as I saw with my own eyes in Jackson Township, that has a power line wrapped inside of it, which may not be visible to you, do not attempt to either drive over it, climb over it, or even touch it. Stay clear. Call it in and leave it to the professionals.

NJ Transit obviously was a victim of this storm as well. They are working to fully restore its rail services to a regular schedule. Some lines are working on weekend service schedules as of 10:00 a.m. Others are trying to get back on their feet. I know the Atlantic City Line toll was back on regular service as of this morning. By the way, NJ Transit is cross honoring a whole range of organizations from PATH to PATCO and in between.

More than 250 trees went down along and across the tracks during yesterday's storms, and crews are working to clear them away. Please visit that website, njtransit.com before you leave home for the latest schedules. Additionally, a number of state parks and forests were impacted by yesterday's storm and remained closed as damage assessments are ongoing. Many parks are also without power. The list of closed parks, at least as of now, includes Island Beach State Park. Obviously, please visit the Division of Parks and Forrest on Facebook, [facebook.com/newjerseystateparks](https://www.facebook.com/newjerseystateparks) for the latest status information as to what's closed, what's opening, and when, etc.

As always, as a general matter, we urge residents to check ready.nj.gov for any emergency updates, generator safety tips, power outage information, and other vital preparedness guidance. I also want to remind you – Pat, I know you'll hit this – for the folks in particular who are going to be out of power measured in days, and if they are elderly or vulnerable, those cooling centers at 211 are incredibly important to keep in mind. Just as a general matter, folks, give a call and check in on an elderly or vulnerable family member, neighbor, friend. Again, this is going to be hot weather, as you can see already, and it will be without question based on our conversations with the electric service providers, Judy, a number of days until everybody's back on their feet. Let's make sure we all stay close during this.

Next, I want to speak to another area we have asked for everyone's continued patience, and that is with the restoration of services at the Motor Vehicle Commission. The MVC's agencies were closed for approximately 16 weeks, but already roughly 55% of their total backlog has been cleared since agencies reopened to the public. By the way, that's more than 483,000 total transactions, which is about 9 weeks' worth of the backlog of customer needs. That is good news.

Much of this success has been because so many transactions can be completed online right there at njmvc.gov. We remind you that before you even leave your house and head to an agency, please check online to see if your business can be conducted remotely. If it can, that's another good reason to stay home and complete it online and save the spot in the line at the MVC itself for someone else.

By the way, if you're not one of the ones that they've gotten to yet and you're frustrated, I don't blame you. We understand this. This is a little bit like unemployment insurance. We've been hit with an all-time historic tsunami, and they're doing great work to catch up on that backlog. That doesn't mean that you shouldn't necessarily feel great about standing in line. Our sympathy is completely with you, but have patience. We are getting there.

As an example, since MVC restarted road tests on June 29th, nearly 40,000 tests have been administered fully, not chopping through a backlog, but fully meeting customer demand and actually leading to open and available appointments as soon as this week. With this backlog now eliminated, the MVC will begin the process of closing the additional sites which it opened to administer behind-the-wheel tests and allowing the instructors assigned to those facilities to return to their regular duties in MVC's Inspections Department. I say this again, even with all of this, we know that some customers still are experiencing some long waits to complete their business with MVC. As a reminder, the MVC has automatically extended the deadlines for numerous documents. Again, go to njmvc.gov to see how that affects you. If you don't need to go today, then let those who have pressing business take care of their transactions.

I express my appreciation to Chief Administrator Sue Fulton and all the women and men of the MVC for their hard work over the past months and for all the hard work still ahead. Again, if their work wasn't hard enough already, they were knocked out by the storm. Four of their locations that were knocked out have been brought back online. As many as eight now either have power outage or are lacking in internet connectivity. Please continue to bear with these folks.

Finally, before we get to the numbers, yesterday we updated the list of states from which travelers to New Jersey are advised to self-quarantine for 14 days. From last week's list, Delaware and Washington, DC had been removed. This week Rhode Island has been added. There's a total of 34 states plus Puerto Rico, which are now under our travel advisory.

Again, the states on this list have over a seven-day rolling average; importantly, either more than 10 new cases of coronavirus per 100,000 residents or a daily positivity rate that is greater than 10%. Visit, if you could, covid19.nj.gov/travel for the complete list of states and to learn whether you should be self-quarantining. If you are arriving from one of these states or if you're a New Jerseyan who visited and are returning, use your smart phone to fill out the travel survey, which is available through this page.

We continue to ask everyone who has been in one of these impacted states to practice self-responsibility and good citizenship by complying with our travel advisories. Again, when you are coming to New Jersey or returning, please go to covid19.nj.gov/travel. Again, this goes equally whether you're a visitor to our state or a New Jersey resident returning from one of these impacted states.

With that, Judy, let's look at the overnight numbers. We're reporting an additional 378 positive test results, cumulative statewide total of 183,327. Daily positivity is up 2.57. Judy, that's up over two for the first time in a number of days. That's still low, by the way. That's still among the lowest in the nation. That's something that we're going to be keeping an eye on.

The statewide rate of transmission continues to come down, a little bit slightly, but down nonetheless. Today it's 1.32. This is still too high, as it's over one, and it means that this virus continues to spread too quickly and too widely across our state. Again, we need to get this number back below one. The only tried and true way we can do it is by social distancing, wearing a mask, practicing good hand hygiene, and taking responsibility for our actions. By the way, that means no crowded indoor house parties.

Before I go on, I know Judy will address this. We spend a lot of time talking about spot positivity and the rate of transmission, as we should. I want to make sure folks realize, and Judy reminds me of this regularly, there's a basket of data that we look at. New hospitalizations would be high on that list, among other things. We look at these things regionally to get a sense of it.

Judy can give you some sense of what that looks like in a minute. Again, this one's an important one. Spot positivity is important. The hospitalizations, new hospitalizations, ICU, etc. are also very important.

In our healthcare system as of last night, there were a total of 295 COVID-confirmed patients being treated, with another 489 listed as persons under investigation pending the return of test results. That's a total of 784 patients. I think you can take the number from yesterday and throw it out the window because that was largely due to a lot of hospitals. By the way, many of which lost their power and were on generators. They were fighting for their lives yesterday. We didn't get the reporting that we normally get.

I'd smooth the number of hospitalizations; 784, that's up a little bit over Monday. That's something, obviously, we're watching carefully. Of these totals, 117 are in intensive care, 47 ventilators in use. Today we're reporting another, sadly with the heaviest of hearts, eight deaths statewide who have now been confirmed from COVID-19. Of these, by the way, three have occurred since the first of the month, so over the past five days.

There were five in-hospital deaths reported yesterday. Again, folks, remember this is deliberately apples and oranges. We're giving you this information to give you some sense of the real at this moment reality, but they are still pending lab confirmation. They are not included in these totals. The total number of lost lives is now standing at an unfathomable 13,989, with the count of probable deaths, which has been reduced slightly to 1,853.

As we do every day, let's remember three more of the New Jerseyans we have lost to this pandemic. We begin by remembering 94-year-old Mamie Wilder, born in Georgia. Mamie moved to Paterson in 1968 to work as a healthcare professional at Holy Name Hospital in Teaneck. She continued her work at Holy Name right up until her retirement in 1993, earning a deserved reputation for compassion and a willingness to do anything she could for the people under her care. Her work ethic set the standard for future generations to follow.

One of Mamie's loves was to cook for her family and friends, and she equally enjoyed undertaking large jigsaw puzzles. She would've been right at home in our daily lives right now. She was an exceptional role model, revered by her family, and had an uncanny ability to see beyond the circumstance to those in need. Her love and affection for her family knew no bounds. She was a dedicated member of the Grace and Restoration Fellowship Church whose pastor also just happened to be her son, Reverend Jerry Wilder. In addition to Reverend Jerry, Mamie leaves also her daughters, Linda, and Pat – and I had the great honor of speaking with Pat on Monday – and sons David and Joseph along with many more grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren, and one of her offspring is a very dear friend of Tammy's and mine, Charity, so I want to give Charity a shoutout in particular. And she leaves behind an entire community of family and friends. We thank Mamie for her years tending to the health and wellness of our New Jersey family and may God bless and watch over her and her family.

Next today, we recall Martin "Marty" Fass. He was 82 years old when COVID-19 took him. Born in Jersey City and raised in North Bergen, he would also make his home in Rockaway and Parsippany. Marty was a graduate of Fairleigh Dickinson University, earning a degree in accounting. He became a certified public accountant at the age of 21 and owned his practice until 2009 when he merged with another firm. In addition to being a respected accountant, Marty was also an entrepreneur, trusted financial advisor, and author and speaker. He was equally engaged in civic life, a leader and tireless volunteer for the Rotary Club of Parsippany, the Parsippany Chamber of Commerce, New Jersey Society of CPAs, Lake Hiawatha Jewish Center, and the Jewish Federation of Greater Metro West, among many others. He was an avid golfer and boater and loved spending his days with family and friends either on the links or on the water. But his family was always his pride and joy. He spent 46 years married to his beloved wife Barbara, who sadly passed away 12 years ago. And he leaves his three daughters, Maxine, Melanie, and Deborah, with whom I had the great honor of speaking on Monday, and their families, including nine grandchildren. He also leaves behind two brothers and two nephews. May Marty's memory be a blessing to all who knew him and a source of peace and love to his family.

And finally today, we remember Santa Sanzero. Born and raised in Naples, Italy, as if I had to say, Santa worked for the Allied Forces during World War II and in a chance encounter, met her future husband, a member of the Army Air Corp named Nicholas. After the war, they would eventually find their way to Lodi and raised the family that was her love and passion. She was an expert storyteller recalling her upbringing in Italy and her experiences living both there and here, stories that often were accompanied by plenty of home-cooked food and if people were lucky, the secrets on how to make it. She knew how to make others feel at home and to share a good laugh. And because of that, Santa had many lifelong friends. Santa is now reunited with Nicholas, who passed away in 2006 after 62 years of marriage. She is survived by their daughters, Lucille and Annamarie, five grandchildren, one of whom is Grant, and I had the great honor, thanks to Grant's technology, to be able to speak to Grant, Lucille, and Annamarie, his mom, all together. She's also survived by five great-grandchildren and four step-great-grandchildren. She also leaves behind her sister, Lydia, who to

this day still lives in Naples, Italy, along with a large extended family and of course, many friends. Santa was 94 years old. We thank her for her service to the Allied cause during wartime and for being a tremendous member of our New Jersey family in peacetime. May God bless and watch over her and her family.

And may God bless every one of the nearly 14,000 New Jerseyans we have now lost to this pandemic. They were real people. They were names and faces that meant so much to so many. They must never be just a number. For them, we will continue to fight this virus and to save lives, and we all need to be in this fight together. This is no time for complacency, for selfishness, or for thinking that someone else can wear a face mask but not you. Please do your part, as you have been doing.

Finally, before I turn things over to Joe, I want to recognize another of the tremendous small businesses that we have partnered with through the New Jersey Economic Development Authority to stay strong through this pandemic. If you've been to Sea Isle City, Lenny Desiderio, who I know watches us and with whom I was back and forth yesterday, its mayor, you probably know the Island Breeze Casino. Island Breeze is an arcade on the promenade owned by the Kiska family, who are celebrating, by the way, their 15th summer at the arcade this year, having opened in 2006. The Kiskas have made Island Breeze more than just a place for fun. They've used the business to help educate people about and raise money for shore preservation, a nod to the time that Ryan – and by the way, that's Ryan with his mom, Kathy, and I had the great honor of speaking with Ryan on Monday and I'm happy to hear from my team that they've suffered some minor water damage but they have power. It is on, and they are open. So it's a nod to Ryan, who helps manage the arcade with his mom and his time spent working at the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. When the pandemic hit and Island Breeze had to temporarily close their doors, the Kiskas knew they would be facing a challenge to pay their bills. They turned to the EDA for assistance and received a small business loan and a grant that has helped cover the rent, to purchase PPE, and other materials to protect their employees and customers. And by the way, to even put an additional employee at the door to ensure the arcade does not exceed its capacity limits. Island Breeze Casino is a great example of a small business committed not just to its employees but to its community. I thank the Kiska family for all they are doing to provide a real Jersey Shore experience to all who visit them and for their dedication to Sea Isle City. And that's a good place to end today.

So again, everyone, let's keep up everything we have been doing and let's drive our numbers down. I would be remiss if I did not mention that the love of my life and the first lady of the great state of New Jersey turns 55 years young today, so Happy Birthday, Tammy. God bless you and thank you for everything you mean to me, our kids, our family, and to the great state of New Jersey. With that, please help me welcome the woman who needs – no, sorry, no, not yet. Does Joe need an introduction? Joe does need an introduction. Please help me welcome a man who needs an introduction, the guy to my left, the President of the Board of Public Utilities, Joe Fiordaliso

Board of Public Utilities President Joseph Fiordaliso: Thank you, Governor. Just as a matter of some comparison here, as the Governor mentioned, at the peak, we had 1.4 million people approximately without power, or customers. Sandy, Super Storm Sandy, at its peak, we had 1.7 million customers without power. Here's a storm that just came through the entire state of New Jersey thank goodness at a more rapid pace than Sandy, but we still had devastating damage. And New Jersey was probably one of the hardest hit states from this particular storm. We are now down to, as the Governor mentioned, approximately 977,000 people without power. So we have – excuse me – almost 500,000 people who have been restored. Regionally, 3.5 million were without power in 14 states. New Jersey got literally whacked, and it really left its mark throughout the entire state. If you were to ask me what region of New Jersey was hit the hardest, I would have difficulty explaining or recognizing any particular area. The entire state was ravaged by this quick-moving storm.

Crews are coming in and are here from Canada, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Washington, DC, and many Midwestern states. We have in excess of 2,000 out-of-state crews who are assisting in the restoration process. Part of the problem here is that in addition to the distribution lines that are affected by falling trees, and poles coming down, and wires coming down, the transmission system has also been damaged considerably. So obviously that has to be fixed first before we can then – or before the utilities can then distribute the energy to your home and my home. So it's going to take a little bit of time.

I've been assured by the utilities – and we've been in constant contact from the Governor on down with these utilities, trying to get a better handle on the restoration. They are following protocol. They are doing the right things, and it's going to take, unfortunately, some time. I'm sorry to have to report that, but that's just the reality of the situation. Our hope is by late Friday night that 80% of customers will have been restored, 80%. Once you get beyond that 80% threshold, we now get into more difficult situations where there are isolated cases, which take, obviously, a lot more time to take care of. But there's considerable tree damage throughout the state of New Jersey, considerable number of poles down, and I want to reiterate one of the things that the Governor mentioned about a fallen wire. Always assume it's a live wire. A wire I was – I got a report this morning, fell on a car. A live wire fell on a car, on the windshield of the car, and literally melted the windshield. So imagine what it can do to you. That's something you don't want to fool around with, please.

Our utilities are constantly reporting the numbers to us. There is a possibility that some folks who have lost their power may not be restored until the end of the weekend. We're hoping for the best. We've prepared for the worst, and unfortunately, we have experienced the worst. Our luck ran out. I was so thrilled, and I know the Governor was, that our winter was relatively mild and there were no major snowstorms. But I think they got back at us, but we are working diligently. And I assure everyone that everything that's being done is being done. And we will continue to work until everyone is restored.

That's basically my report, Governor, and if there are any questions later, certainly.

Governor Phil Murphy: Joe, thank you. Deep appreciation for your leadership during this storm and always. One other fact that was raised with me by my mayor a short while ago, Tony Perry in Middletown. Their fire department have responded to 30 carbon monoxide calls in that town alone. Now, that's about a 75,000 resident community. So generator safety is another point I know you want to make.

Board of Public Utilities President Joseph Fiordaliso: Yes.

Governor Phil Murphy: So folks, please, please, please be careful. And again, I don't think – we don't want to – first of all, we're not the electric service providers. I promise you, Joe and his team and Pat and I personally will be on the electric service providers to get folks back up and running as fast as possible and as safely as possible. We've got to make sure the women and men who are doing this are safe, as safe as possible. But I think the message from those providers, from those companies, which you're amplifying, Joe, as have I, we should get to "most everybody" back by tomorrow or maybe Friday, but there are going to be some folks, as there have been in every storm that the three of us have been involved with, that are not going to be on in the next couple of days. It's going to be a many-day process. And so in particular for folks within those communities that are vulnerable, elderly, let's make sure we're all banding together. The 211 option for the cooling centers, just making that phone call, checking in on folks is key across the board. And Joe, thank you for everything.

Board of Public Utilities President Joseph Fiordaliso: Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: With that, now help me welcome the woman who needs no introduction, the commissioner not of the BPU but of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichelli: Thank you, Governor, and good afternoon.

As we have said repeatedly, to contain the spread of COVID-19 in our state, we need robust testing and contact tracing. To ensure more residents understand the importance of these initiatives, this week we launched a COVID-19 testing and contact tracing public awareness campaign. The campaign focuses on driving people to get tested, as well emphasizing the importance of contact tracing. As part of this effort, we are aiming to increase knowledge of what contact tracing is and addressing concerns such as privacy. The campaign, For Each Other, For Us All, reinforces that we are in this together. What one person does or doesn't do can impact another, and we must work together to protect not only ourselves but our families and our community at large to get through this pandemic.

This campaign is a multi-channel communications effort reaching vulnerable and high-risk audiences across the state with a heightened focus on communities of color, which have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Advertising is targeted to reach populations most at risk, which include frontline workers, seniors, farm workers, and the LGBTQ population. Ads will also run in multi-cultural communities such as the

cities of Newark, Patterson, Elizabeth, Camden, Atlantic City, and Trenton. The campaign will run throughout the summer and will include digital and social media platforms, television, radio, billboards, transit and electric signage across the state. These ads will appear in English, Spanish, Arabic, Korean, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Hindi. In addition, Facebook ads will be translated into 15 languages based on users' language settings on the platform.

As part of the campaign, we are also focusing on younger individuals under the age of 30 because of the risky behaviors we have seen them engage in. We must continue to emphasize the message as the Governor and I have been doing, that when young people gather in crowded spaces without the proper precautions, they are putting their loved ones at risk. They are putting themselves at risk. They're affecting – they may affect their parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. We need them to get tested and participate in contact tracing to protect the health of our state. Messaging toolkits will be distributed to local health departments, sister state agencies, hospitals, elected officials, federally qualified health centers, and several community groups. As For Each Other, For Us All conveys, we need everyone's help. When you see these ads, we ask that you share them on social media to widen our reach. We want everyone to receive these important messages.

Now moving on to my daily report, as the Governor shared, our hospitals reported 784 hospitalizations of COVID-19 and persons under investigation with 117 individuals in critical care, and 40% of those individuals on ventilators. Several hospitals and long-term care facilities were on emergency generation yesterday and throughout the night. Some of the hospitals did report being on divert status as a result of the storm. There are no new reports of multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children. The count remains at 55 in our state. The children affected, as I have reported in the past, have either tested positive for COVID-19 or have had antibody tests that were positive.

The Governor reviewed the new cases and deaths reported. Sadly today, we are reporting the death of a seven-month-old baby who after death tested positive for COVID-19. However, we do not know the primary cause of this death at this point in time. For privacy reasons, the Department is not releasing any further information on this tragic loss. Our thoughts are with the family.

Of the eight deaths we are reporting today, all occurred in July and August and as the Governor mentioned, of those eight, three deaths occurred since August 1st. At the state veterans' homes, the numbers remain the same as they do at the state psychiatric homes. The daily percent positivity is reported today as 2.57. The northern part of the state reports 2.44; the central part of the state, 1.56; and the south, 3.79. As we have noted consistently, the positivity rate in the southern region of the state is higher than the northern and central region. That is not due to a lack of testing. For example, in the month of June, the northern region reported 230 tests per 100,000 population. The central region reported 229 per 100,000 population, and the southern region led the state with 254 tests per 100,000. Just as a reminder, this is just one indicator of several that we review on a daily basis. The communicable disease service daily not only looks at RT, looks at the positivity rates, looks at new hospitalizations, looks at deaths reported, and also looks at syndromic surveillance. That is E-room visits for influenza-like illnesses or COVID-like illnesses. Together, those indicators are looked at on a daily basis and are reported consistently to the Governor and his team.

So stay connected, stay safe, stay healthy, get tested, and mask up. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, I love the public relations campaign, so hats off to you for that. God bless the seven-month-old, and as we have with any other loss of life but particularly young children, for privacy purposes, we're going to leave it just where you said it. If you look at the 200-somethings per 100,000 residents of testing capacity, I'm not going to pick on other states, but one thing that we haven't talked a whole lot about lately is capacity on testing. We've spent an enormous amount of time talking about – because of the national surge elsewhere that lab turnaround has gotten longer, although it's gotten a little bit better but not sufficiently better, that the pressure on reagents and other supplies, because of that flaring – but you're not going to see many states in America that can test at 200-something per capita. I'm not going to pick another state but one of the states that it's been raging over the past month, a few – probably two weeks ago was testing 11 persons per 100,000. And so we're proud of the capacity, particularly hats off to the south because there was rightful discussion early on because this thing was raging in Bergen County, and then Essex, and Hudson, and spread to Passaic and Middlesex and Union. And we've talked about those as

the big six, but the south, which has fewer people but also fewer healthcare assets per persons, has really done a good job of building up that capacity. So to each of our regional coordinators – in this case, Kevin O'Dowd in the south at Cooper – hats off.

Ed, should we be concerned about the spot positivity jumping up to two-something today or is this going to be as we normally say, we're going to look at seven-day averages and not be too concerned about a blip?

Department of Health Medical Director Dr. Edward Lifshitz: I don't get too concerned about a single blip. I certainly watch everything, pay attention to everything, and looking, as you mentioned many times, overall patterns and as of yet, we're not seeing that dramatic pattern that concerns me but certainly paying attention.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yep. So thank you, Judy. Thank you, Ed. Pat, you've been on double or triple duty in the category if it isn't one thing, it's another. Now storm reality, so any update on any of compliance, storm aftermath, any comments you want to weigh in to amplify Joe's good comments? Anything on cooling centers or any other topics? Thank you for your leadership.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thanks, Governor. Good afternoon. There were no executive order compliance issues reported to the Rock overnight and in addition to the rain and the winds, National Weather Service out of Mount Holly did confirm two tornadoes down in Cape May County. From a few of our key partners in storms like this, DEP, they've got chainsaw crews out in several areas of the state helping us with tree removals. Parks, if folks have questions about the parks, they are opening on a case-by-case basis once they've been inspected and found to be without debris issues. DEP is also involved with the beach assessments that always happen after a storm like this as well as wastewater plant assessments after a storm like this.

With regard to DOT, as of right now, 55 roads remain closed. Our main thoroughfares and highways are open but still working on 55 road closures. Gov, I know you talked about transit. Hundreds of trees down on tracks. They're working diligently on the repair signals and the overhead wires there. Those lines will obviously resume service as those repairs are complete. And I'll end just – and I know you touched upon it, Gov, and Joe and I talked about it in the back. Generator use in a basement, in a garage, in a partially enclosed part of your house is deadly. You cannot smell it. It has killed people before, and I drive that message home about generator use, especially when we know there's folks that are going to be a few more days possibly without power and also use this opportunity to – for those with special needs and on equipment that requires electricity, all of the service providers have the way to register to be placed as a priority regardless of whether that's a ventilator or what that equipment is. And I would just certainly make that recommendation for those that have not done so that need electricity to run their lifesaving equipment. And 211, beyond cooling centers, any unmet needs, 211 is a great resource to go to in order to report those unmet needs.

That's all I have, Gov.

Governor Phil Murphy: Pat, thank you. I think 211 and ready.nj.gov are the two places I'd either call or go to in terms of a website. Thank you for all that, amplifying the carbon monoxide threat. We're going to start over here. Ashvon [41:08] has got the mic but before you do, Joe made this point: a million-four out of just Sandy, a million-seven, so those are probably top two maybe ever but huge difference in the speed with which this storm came through relative to Sandy. So you look at the absolute utter destruction of flooding and home destruction and other destruction coming out of Sandy versus – I'm not suggesting there was another destruction or there aren't collateral issues. You mentioned the two tornadoes, but just dramatically different. That's why we've been saying the legacy on this storm is power outages, which we'll be dealing with over the next number of days.

Board of Public Utilities President Joseph Fiordaliso: And Governor, if I may, that is another reason why there were delays in restoring folks, just clearing of the roads with all the trees that are down, with all the poles that are down. In order for the restoration to proceed, that has to be cleared first.

Governor Phil Murphy: You bet.

Board of Public Utilities President Joseph Fiordaliso: So that's another reason why power doesn't come back just like that.

Governor Phil Murphy: It's another reason NJ Transit doesn't snap back, either, for similar reasons, right?

Board of Public Utilities President Joseph Fiordaliso: Exactly.

Governor Phil Murphy: Before we jump in, a couple of quick things. We'll be with you virtually, Mahen, tomorrow but together, unless you hear otherwise, at 1 o'clock on Friday, number one. Number two, in addition to being consumed by the storm over the past 48 if not 72 hours, just to give an update, I think we have a constructive call, Judy and Pat, on Monday with the White House, our weekly call. There's clearly more – among the folks who matter, the scientists and the medical experts, there's a growing sense that the notion of therapeutics and a safe and scalable vaccine are within reach. I hope that's true. I hosted yesterday a Democratic governors' call. We had about 18 governors on with leader Chuck Schumer, and he's in there with Speaker Pelosi, Secretary Mnuchin, with whom I've also had a number of exchanges over the past 24-plus hours. It does not – I mean, I think people are acting in good faith, as far as I can tell, but there's no deal in the offing as far as I can see. God willing, there is a deal. Just reiterate, we need federal direct cash assistance if we're going to keep the frontline workers in their jobs. Folks who are on unemployment insurance need an extension. Small businesses, restaurants need relief. The list goes on and on. We have a National Governors Association call right after this where I'm sure that the pandemic will be, in addition to electing new officers, and I want to thank my colleague, Larry Hogan, for his leadership and I want to congratulate Governor Andrew Cuomo who is taking over as Chair of the National Governors' Association effective in about an hour. And that's an organization – the more robust it is, the better the voice of governors is heard, particularly in this time of need, and I want to again thank Governor Hogan for his leadership and wish Governor Cuomo his – nothing but the very best and know that it'll be under great leadership with him at the helm.

So with that, Matt, we'll start with you. Good afternoon.

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: Good afternoon. Commissioner, you mentioned in your remarks that a seven-month-old died. I'm curious if that's the youngest COVID death that we've had in this state. Governor, what do you make of legislation that would set fines and possible jail time for those that don't wear a mask? I know that you don't like to talk about pending legislation, but you did as recently as this week or last week, so just curious about that. And also, how curious how difficult it is to enforce house parties. Is that something authorities are having trouble with? The President just cut funding for the state National Guard troops called to help fight the pandemic from 75% from 100% except for Florida and Texas. Curious what impact this will have on New Jersey and what your reaction to the cuts are. And finally, the president, President Trump last night expressed his opposition to more aid for state and local governments calling it "a trillion dollars to help out with cities that are run by Democrats, in some cases radical left Democrats, that have not done a good job," and I'm curious how you react to that.

Governor Phil Murphy: I hope I wasn't in that last category. I think we can say, because we've given the ages of the other two, that this is the youngest person. We consider that definitively, but we cannot say cause of death definitively. All Judy has said is that sadly after passing, this infant had COVID-19 but nothing beyond cause of death. I apologize, I was writing it down and missed the legislation you asked me about.

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: There's legislation that would set fines and possible jail time – excuse me – for people that refuse to wear a mask.

Governor Phil Murphy: Again, I won't comment on the specifics other than to say the spirit of it, I like, but like a lot of things, the devil's in the details on this. And I know that there are organizations like the ACLU which have expressed concerns, so I'll leave to that.

House parties are harder to enforce in a place that's licensed, probably, Pat, for obvious reasons, right? It's got a name on the door. They've got a license for food, beverage, or both. But we're starting to get more and more advanced notice on these parties and fair to say that we are both at your level and at county and local levels, this is something we're taking very seriously. But for obvious reasons, it is harder to get your arms around a private home. That's why we're pleading with not just state officials but county and local as well as moms and dads. Please, don't let this happen. We're okay if you want to gather, but do it outside, do it with one of these, do it at a safe distance, but please, cut the inside stuff out.

Cutting from 100 to 75, I suspect it is 75. I'm looking at Matt. It is 75, and I had missed this, that he maybe raised the cost share from 75 to 100, zero for those two states. Does that sound possible? I had missed this.

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: I haven't seen what Matt's reference is. [inaudible 0:47:29].

Governor Phil Murphy: I think we got to come back to you. Right now, there's a cost split, federal/state of 75/25. We have been asking for that to be raised 100/0, which would lift a huge burden off of states. It's possible he did that for a couple states. I have not seen it, but we'll come back to you.

Listen, I – respecting the President – I did not see what he said. Respecting the office of the Presidency, I just disagree. State and local aid is a huge game-changer. It is the step when you – when they interview the folks at the end of the George W Bush Administration and the early moments of the Obama Administration and you ask them what was the difference-maker, in overwhelming amount of cases, it was they put money into state and local entities who in turn were able to put money on the street immediately. And money on the street, in my definition, includes keeping firefighters, police, healthcare, educators, EMS in their jobs. So I just – again, with great respect, it is a game-changer for the good.

Secondly, it has nothing whatsoever to do with blue or red or legacy. Think about a state like Florida that relies overwhelming on tourism, that does not have an income tax. Therefore, it is overwhelming relying on sales tax. That has, last I checked, a Republican governor. We wish them nothing but the very best in getting the pandemic under control and getting back on their feet, but that's an example of a state run by a Republican governor that will be in desperate need for state and local assistance. And that's not the only example; there are examples now littered across the country. It was one thing to say when the thing was – when the pandemic was firing in greater New York. You could look at okay, well, gosh, those are blue states and they have been around longer and have got some issues, by the way, in part that I got elected to fix and we were on our way to fixing. We got that taken care of. That's not the point. And so I just want to make sure that we say that as forcefully as possible.

Matt, we'll get back to you on the cost share, which I think that's what it is but we'll come back and let you know.

Sir, do you have anything? Okay. Sir, good afternoon.

Reporter, NJTV News: Good afternoon, Governor. A couple questions this morning from NJTV News. Some school districts, like Bayonne, have presented all virtual plans for school in September. Is the Department of Education considering those plans even though they wouldn't have kids returning to school? Will New Jersey issue guidance like New York did that would require a classroom or school to shut down once two or more students or teachers are infected with COVID? Two owners that we've spoken to of small businesses, one a gym and the other a diner, that have put safety precautions in place think you're not holding big box stores to the same standards and that you're going against Constitutional rights by trying to close them down. What do you say to these businesses? Why continue to keep gyms and indoor restaurants from legally reopening if they feel they've demonstrated that they can do it safely with protocols in place? Are there any duplications in positive tests reported? If someone tests positive at one location one week and two weeks later, it gets retested, is that counted as two positives or not? And finally, you said last week that due to contact tracing, you have more information and are able to say things like outdoor dining is not a problem. Can you share more insights based on this information on how people are contracting COVID? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'll start, Judy, and turn to you. I would just say on school districts, our folks are in the process of reviewing all these plans. And we are taking each and every one of them deadly seriously, as you would hope we would. And there's no new news to report on that front other than to reiterate health, education, equity are the three big guiding principles and to remind everybody this will not be a normal school year no matter what your district looks like.

Guidance, yes, the answer is yes, we want to make sure we get that right. Other states have done that. We want to make sure we get that as right as possible. And we've got the benefit of a little bit of time on the clock and given the way this pandemic behaves – by the way, it dictates so much of the timeframe and so many of the moves as opposed to what we wish we could do. We will give that guidance but we want to use all the time we have on the clock.

I have nothing but sympathy for the small business owners. You said a gym and a diner? Yeah, I mean, and again, I had – I saw some of the gym folks last night on CNN. We'll get there, I hope, God willing, sooner than later. But the nature of what you do in a gym and the nature of what you do in a diner are bigger – are different than the nature of what you do in a big box store. In a big box store, you have to keep your mask on

the whole time. You walk in, you do your business, and you leave. In a diner, you got to take your mask off to eat or drink. You're sedentary. You're indoors. We know for a fact, Judy and Ed, that indoors is – the virus is more lethal than outdoors. And gyms, by virtue of the activity, you're doing certain things in a place and again, we have nothing but sympathy. We want to get there, and it would be really helpful if folks want us to get there that they would help us crack down on the non-compliant behavior, particularly at house parties. I would like to say that the actions are the same but they're not.

Any observations on the last two quickly, which is are there duplicates in positives and secondly on contact tracing, I think the general question is – I'm not sure I said it specific to contact tracing but the general comment is we have no evidence of any flare-up of the virus in any outdoor activities: protests, beaches, parks, outdoor dining. And so I'm not sure – I don't have more color on that other than I know we don't have any evidence of that. But any thoughts on either of those questions, folks?

Department of Health Medical Director Dr. Edward Lifshitz: Just very quickly, as far as the confirmed cases go, these are not duplicancies or individuals, and one of the reasons you'll see our numbers sometimes change, for example, is we're always calling back through the list to make sure that there aren't duplicates in there. So no, the confirmed cases are individual people, not tests.

Governor Phil Murphy: How about the – I think that's all we got on the contact – on the outdoor stuff. Thank you for that.

Dave, good afternoon.

David Mattau, NJ 101.5: Hi, Governor. The RT has inched down a little bit according to the information we're getting today. Deaths are very low. The positivity rate is up slightly. Hospitalizations, ICUs, vents all remain very low. So we are seeing, though, this increase in cases. Do we have any sense of what's going on here? Some are saying this trend may signal a boost in herd immunity with more people perhaps becoming positive but fewer people really getting sick. Is it possible that this is a changing situation with regard to this pandemic and perhaps not as dangerous? I don't know. Second question, if schools do mostly remote learning or if they're forced to do all remote learning – a lot of people are very nervous about reopening schools at all – at what point will the state of New Jersey step in to try to figure out ways to help the families where they can't stay home with the kids? I know we touched on this a couple weeks ago. There was concern about it. And do you think honestly, Governor, that schools just may not open or may open for a week and they're going to have to close? Is this something that you're concerned about? Have you thought about this? Final question, some school superintendents are complaining about constantly getting updated checklists. They say they're not being given enough time to adjust their plans properly as they try to get ready to reopen school. What is your message to them? Are the checklists changing because data and conditions are changing? Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: I would say – and I'll invite Judy or Ed to come in on this. It is encouraging to have one of the lowest spot positivity rates in the country. Even though it's up over the past couple of days, it's still low relative to any measure of acceptability and relative to other states. I'm not smart enough to give you an answer on herd immunity, but if there is herd immunity it's probably first going to evidence itself in greater New York including us. But secondly, I think it's a testament to the amount of tests. We're doing an enormous amount of testing right now. I'll address the other two comments briefly, and then maybe ask you folks to come in on that.

I don't have a – don't be mad at me, Dave. I've got nothing really to add on the school front. We know that folks, by district, are taking this really seriously, superintendents, educators, parents, kids, staff, other folks of interest. Whether it's hybrid – we've obviously given folks the flexibility. And that's another word that I think guides us to remote learn. But again, not going to be normal, as much flexibility as possible. Principles health, education, equity, and again, to underscore that point to your question, some folks just need to rely on in-person schooling a lot more than others. And so figuring out how to make that work, including the folks who are dual income, have to both go out and work and making sure that that can be allowed in the confines of their home is something – we'll look at that district by district but nothing really new to report on that.

Listen, I have sympathy with the supers. I hope they realize that this is – we've never gone through this before as a state or as a nation or as a world. There's no playbook. Facts do evolve. I think that is partly. I hope that folks think that we listen and we're responsive. So we actually were asked by many supers to come up with a

checklist to make sure they hadn't been missing that. We have been asked to clarify face coverings. We have been begged to – by many to close the digital divide. Those are three developments that have occurred over the past month that were not part of the original parameters. I hope that's because we listened. In some cases, it's because the facts have changed and we have to understand that the facts may continue to change, which is why having time on the clock is an asset for us to have to make all the decisions that we have to make. And we're trying to work as constructively as possible with all of the stakeholders in all the districts around the state. Thank you.

We'll close you out, sir. Real quick, Dave. Oh, you're going to come back on RT and other things. Thank you.

Department of Health Medical Director Dr. Edward Lifshitz: Herd immunity is a general concept by which as people become more and more immune or more people become immune, it becomes harder for a virus or other infection to spread from person to person and at some point when enough people become immune, even if individuals become ill, it doesn't spread around and it doesn't begin to explode out like this has. The exact number of people that need to be immune for that to happen varies depending on the disease. And the exact number that is needed for that to happen for COVID isn't completely understood but it's thought to be somewhere in the neighborhood of about 70 to 80% of the population would need to become immune before that would be safe, that basically you wouldn't get these outbreaks because of that. At this point, it is clear that we're nowhere near that high a level. So I am comfortable in saying no, even in the harder hit parts of New Jersey, we don't have anywhere near that number of people who are currently immune. Now some people are likely immune but nowhere near that number. While we are seeing at this point relatively low hospitalizations and deaths is almost assure a combination of the following factors: for one thing, we have shifted somewhat to a younger age group, so more younger people are getting this. And luckily, they tend not to get as ill or end up being hospitalized or of course, dying. The other thing, though, is the hospitalizations and deaths definitely lag. It takes a while after people being – getting sick until they begin going to the hospitalize or they begin dying, and if younger people are getting sick and they are not getting hospitalized, they are still often infecting others who may then down the road become ill and those bad outcomes may happen.

So to answer the question, overall what I think that we're seeing is this: I think we're seeing somewhat of a younger population getting ill, which in the short term is good. They're less likely to have serious outcomes. However, for the state as a whole it is very concerning because those younger people can affect other people. They themselves can sometimes become sick and while we're not seeing it yet, we're always trying to figure out what we might be seeing two, four, six, eight weeks down the road if this continues.

Governor Phil Murphy: Amen. We're going to close out. We've got to go real quick just because I've got to make this National Governors' thing. Please.

Phil Andrews, NJNN: Oh, hey, how you doing? Phil Andrews of the New Jersey News Network. Governor, I need you to bring your seatback forward, fasten your seatbelt for this line of questioning because it's redundant, but I've got to ask you these questions on behalf of a lot of small business owners. By nature, gyms are for health and mental well-being. Why would you not consider that essential? I know that over the last couple of months, you've had conversations with gym owners throughout the state, and you've been very impressed with some of the protocol that they've brought to you. Some have even invited you to come look at their gyms and their protocol. What would it take for those gym owners to have the same advantages as martial arts, dance studios, and gymnastics schools to be allowed to have their people come in? Because there's times where in those positions, they're sedentary also, especially during martial arts. When kids are sparring other kids are sitting around watching. And the final question is because of the nature of the way gyms are built, they have great contact information. Wouldn't that be an ideal situation for contact tracing, because you're able to get the contact information? That's it.

Governor Phil Murphy: So we're good.

Phil Andrews, NJNN: By the way, you're never supposed to give out your wife's actual age.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, thank you. She'll probably remind me of that when I get home. So listen, I just repeat this on gyms, and I'll be brief because we're covering ground we've covered even today. Completely get it; it's mental and physical health. Get that. Remember, they are open and available for private appointments with individuals or with bubbles, which is typically a family but at least a group of people who have been living

together. Secondly, it's not a forever and always. I mean, I like going to the gym. I mean, we want to get there. Your point on contact information is a good one, an outstanding one, and that's an asset. I can't give you timing.

What would it take? I think it would take a sustained – and I think maybe we're at the front-end of that – a sustained series, at least seven days, rolling averages of numbers that are really good, and it would be also good to see the rest of the nation get themselves under control. And you rightfully point out and I personally had interactions with folks. I'll give a shoutout to the guys at Atlantic Health who have an outpost in Red Bank. It's Kevin McQue [1:03:36], I think. Kevin's been very responsible. He's one of the guys who represents the industry. We take the protocols that they're proposing very seriously. We want to get there, and I want to also commend while there are a few that have been loud and have been challenging, the overwhelming amount of the folks who operate these things have been really good and responsible, and we have nothing but sympathy, and we want to get there. I promise you, we want to get there. If we get sustained numbers that are in a good place and we don't feel like the rest of the country could come back on us and come in through the back door, God willing, we get there.

So with that, I'm going to mask up, if that's okay. Joe's already there. I want to thank Judy and Ed, as always, for your leadership and for enlightening us so well. Pat, as always, Jared, Matt, Mahen, and the whole team will be back with you at 1 o'clock on Friday, virtual tomorrow, and Joe, a particular treat to have you with us.

Two quick thoughts as we leave. Number one to everybody, thank you for what you've been doing. Thank you for your patience. That's probably a word that's run through our entire lives over the past four or five months now with a storm added to that. Patience when you are staying at home, patience as we've begun to open up the state, and you're looking for more guidance on things like indoor dining or gyms, etc. Then secondly, specific to the storm, everybody stay safe. Check on somebody who's vulnerable or old. 211 or ready.nj.gov are two places I would suggest. I think Pat would join me in suggesting those are good spots to go. Joe, I think, would agree.

Know that for just under a million households that are out – and that number's coming down probably as we've sat here for the past hour – a lot of you will be back out and running in the next day or two but some of you will not be. And so please bear with the electric services providers. If you've got any issues with somebody vulnerable, get on that phone number, get on that website, and everybody, stay safe, God bless you, and thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy

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