



OFFICIAL SITE OF THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY

Translate (<https://translate.google.com/>)  
 Get Updates  (<https://nj.gov/subscribe/>)  
 Search  (<https://nj.gov/search/>)

Governor Phil Murphy

# TRANSCRIPT: December 14th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

12/14/2020

 (<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>)

 (<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy>)

 (<https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice>)

 (<https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>)

 (<https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>)

Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



**Governor Phil Murphy:** Good afternoon, everyone. I'm honored to be joined by the woman on my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. To her right, another familiar face, the State's Epidemiologist, Dr. Christina Tan, thank you both. Guy to my left who needs no introduction, Superintendent of the State Police Colonel Pat Callahan. We have the Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, Jared Maples, we have Chief Counsel Parimal Garg. I think this week, perhaps as much as any we've had in a long time, we'll test the "Can you walk and chew gum?" theory. So whether it's the Electoral College, COVID raging, vaccines, Mother Nature, we have a lot going on here.

Because we are a full service operation, let's start with a weather report. As anyone looking out a window can see, we are experiencing our first winter weather day of the season, at least across the northern part of the state, where a couple of inches is possible in some places by this afternoon. The Department of Transportation already has more than 400 pieces of equipment deployed. Roads may be a bit slick in spots, so we ask anyone out there to be extra cautious, and to yield to spreaders and ploughs to let them treat the road ahead.

This system is expected to move out through the afternoon and then our attention will turn to Wednesday and Thursday, which right now looks to be our first significant storm. A winter storm has already been posted by the National Weather Service. I think you skipped -- is there a second one of these or not? There

should have been one for Wednesday. Is there a Wednesday? Not sure that you got it.

There we go. Wednesday's storm, that'll give you a little bit of a sense here. This system has the potential to provide snow to almost the entire state. South Jersey seems set up to receive -- and again this is as of today and please accept folks that this is going to move around -- but South Jersey up to four inches of snow and a band of sort of 6 to 12 inches may fall across Central Jersey and up to 18 inches is possible into Northern Jersey. We will have more updates as the forecast becomes more crystallized over the next 24 to 48 hours, but I know Pat and his team are already preparing for this system, as are Diane Scaccetti and her team at the Department of Transportation, Joe Fiordaliso at the Board of Public Utilities and our regional partners. So if we can put that other one back up there, which gives you where to go if you are in need of information. Facebook.com/readyNewJersey; Twitter is @readyNJ, and by the way, if the power goes out, don't assume your neighbor called it in, please call it in yourself and do not go near any downed lines at all costs. A reliable website that we've been talking about for several years, that continues to be I think the best catch-all place for a storm is ready.nj.gov. So stay tuned, folks.

Next up, tomorrow is going to be a big day. Tomorrow morning Judy and I will be in Newark, alongside University Hospital President Dr. Shereef Elnahal and others to witness some of our heroic frontline healthcare workers receive the first vaccinations against COVID-19 in New Jersey. As the governor's office continues, our other health systems and hospitals statewide will begin vaccinating their frontline healthcare workers as well.

To be sure we are confident in the safety and efficacy of this Pfizer (BioNTech) vaccine and the review conducted by the Vaccine Advisory Panel which recommended Pfizer's emergency use application to be allowed to move forward and in the FDA's action. Now as we have been saying on this side of the empty It is, however, a momentous day. It's a day we've all been waiting for. It is a day of hope and optimism for getting to the other side but it is not the end. As more vaccine shipments arrive and as we anticipate, Judy, I believe still Moderna's vaccine will hopefully also be approved for its emergency use later this week, our vaccination program will become much more robust over the coming weeks.

Our healthcare workers and long-term care facility residents and staff remain our top priority for initial vaccinations. Our hopes are, for timing, that as one group of vaccine recipients receives their second dose, a new tranche of recipients will be receiving their first. This overlap or overlapping waves will allow us to ensure our vaccine progress.

To be sure we are confident in the FDA's action and in the review conducted by the Vaccine Advisory Panel, which recommended that Pfizer's emergency use application be allowed to move forward but to also be sure, we are also in for several hard months, I'd say especially the next six to eight weeks. As vaccinations move forward, we are going to be facing stiff headwinds from the second wave. To that point, we are reporting an additional 4,805 new positive test results -- these are PCR only, Judy -- meaning that a total of 405,448 New Jerseyans have tested positive for coronavirus since March 4th. Our test positivity from last Thursday, based on what was 38,861 PCR tests, 10.95%.

Statewide rate of transmission is 1.13 and our guess is it's going to stay in that range, maybe even go a little bit higher in the coming days. And in our hospitals, another 350 COVID positive patients were admitted yesterday, that is 50 more than the 300 live patients who were discharged. By last night, our hospitals were treating a total of 3,635, 3,425 of whom were confirmed COVID positive, and that is another increase since the weekend.

The number of ICU beds filled was 704. That's the first time we have been over 700 since May 28th. Just by way of comparison, the peak, Judy, I show at ICU beds was April 13th, 2,080 beds, so we're just over one-third of that total. And of those 704 folks, 491 were on ventilators.

These numbers will not magically return to zero because we're about to provide our first vaccinations. For us to reach the level of so-called herd immunity among adults that we aspire to do, it will require at least 70% of New Jersey's adults to be vaccinated. That is roughly, for those of you keeping score at home, 4.7 million of us. These are numbers we're probably going to keep seeing for the coming weeks and that's why we cannot let our guard down.


Especially I say to our younger folks, please take this seriously. The share of new infections continues to skew toward younger residents, while the share of deaths continues to skew toward older ones. Let that sink in. You may be young, you may feel fine and not show a symptom to anyone but you could be, and I hate to be so heavy-handed about this, you could be passing this on to your parents or grandparents and essentially, I hate to say it, killing them.

We all still have a lot more work ahead of us. That also includes work with our contact tracers whose job it is to help stop the spread of disease by making sure those who have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive knows their status. Last week, we put another 233 contact tracers on the job, more than 3,300 are working diligently every day to fight this public health crisis. We have met our benchmark of 30 contact tracers for every 100,000 residents in every county but one, and in some counties we're well over that level. We have made sure our contact tracing corps is properly trained. We have made sure that they come from the communities in which they work. We have done everything we can to give our communities the tools to fight COVID, and yet they hit walls because the people they are trained to help aren't helping them or themselves. The percentage of people who aren't cooperating with our contact tracers got as high as 78% last week.

 (<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>)


So I ask you all again, in fact, I implore you, if one of our friends please don't go with them. No one is out on a witch hunt. No one doubts that you'll have the best interest when you say it's okay, I'll call my friends on my own. But this is a time when a trained public health expert needs to be in the game, in the lead.

 (<https://www.facebook.com/govmurphy>)

 (<https://www.youtube.com/bigovergseffice>)

 (<https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>)

We have also, as you know, created the COVID Alert NJ app to help ensure that you get notified if you have been potentially exposed. That app has now been downloaded (<https://www.beapsgoingup.com/>) dramatically by about 460,000 times. We are continuing to make improvements and are currently testing upgrades of the app in 10 additional languages, including Arabic, Gujarat, Hindi, Korean and Portuguese, among others, that are often heard across our incredibly diverse state.

 (<https://www.beapsgoingup.com/>)

Both the community contact tracing corps and the COVID Alert NJ app are resources that we have created to help us fight this pandemic, but they aren't effective unless we let them work and unless we all pull together. We can't begin the process of relaxing the restrictions that we have in place to enforce social distancing and keep our communities as healthy as possible.

The other day I had the opportunity to check in with another tremendous small business owner, that's Antoine Walkins on the left and Tamara Weaver on the right. I had the great opportunity to speak to Antoine on Friday. They are a husband and wife dynamo team behind the neighborhood eatery N&N's Shortstop in Salem City. They moved to Salem from their native Paterson because they saw a need for an affordable and accessible restaurant in what was one of our state's food deserts. And because of the pandemic, they've been working with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority to receive the grant funding that they need to keep a critical part of their community open and thriving and feeding neighbors. Antoine and Tamara can't get to where they dream of being until we push this pandemic down. Check them out, by the way, website [nshortstop.com](http://nshortstop.com), or in Salem City, they're at 191 East Broadway. They're terrific folks.

And by the way, what I've just said about them goes for every small business that's hurting right now. We know they're hurting, and there's nothing more that I want to be able to do than to lift the restrictions we have in place, but that can't happen until we know we can do so without fueling a new spike. And by the way, federal assistance would be really helpful right now for small businesses up and down our state, just like theirs.

So, in order to break the back of this virus, it takes all of us working together, especially when it comes to indoor activities. As we noted on Friday, we are not going to hesitate to name and shame the restaurants and bars flouting public health requirements and giving the thousands of folks across the industry doing the right things a black eye. And by the way, you're going to speak to some of this in a little bit, Pat, I believe. And it's why we've hit the pause on indoor sports and limited occupancy in gyms, and won't take kindly to anyone trying to make an end round and run around those either.

Look, we have received -- there's good news here, right? -- our first roughly 76,000 doses of the vaccine. We know hundreds of thousands more will be following behind across the next few weeks. This is a start, but it is just the first drops in a really big bucket. We know we will have to ensure the steady supply that we've been preparing for and we know that we'll have to work against vaccine misinformation and skepticism. I want to play on Winston Churchill's words that this is not the end. The summer was, I think, the end of the beginning but now we hope that we are now at the beginning of the end, which will take some number of months to play out.

But again, to be sure, tomorrow is a big day. It is a day worth celebrating. It is a day for honoring the brave healthcare workers who have been putting in long, fraught hours to protect lives and secure public health, while worrying about their own health and that of their families. For them, for all of us, let's keep fighting and let's keep working together. Tomorrow is that that thing that we see, that light that we see is the light at the end of the tunnel, but we have to travel more before we are through this darkness.

So even though we can now point to a vaccine, we cannot give up on the practices that will help us through: social distancing, wearing our masks, washing our hands, staying at home when we don't feel well, and using common sense and going out at the right moment in time for the right reasons, and get tested. This is how we save lives this winter as we begin the process of vaccinating our population as effectively as we can, and as soon as we can.

Sadly though, we know that there are those for whom all of these actions will come to late. Today, we have the solemn obligation to report that another 25 of our fellow New Jerseyans are now confirmed to have died from complications of COVID-19. We now have lost confirmed from COVID 15,907 blessed brothers and sisters from our New Jersey family, and another 1,868 brave souls.

One week ago, this past Saturday, we lost Robbie Hunt, a well-known South Plainfield small business owner and longtime borough resident. Robbie was only 62 years old. He was a proud union member of Plumbers Local 24 and was both a contractor for his local as well as for Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 9. Those are two locals I know well. Robbie was also a lifelong New York Giants fan and season ticket holder and sadly, could not attend any of the home games this season because of the pandemic, but I know he will be missed by his MetLife Stadium neighbors.

He leaves behind his wife in the middle there of 36 years, Sharon, and his children, his daughter Chelsea and sons Brian and Tyler and I spoke to all of them on Friday, Sharon, Chelsea, Brian and Tyler. He also leaves behind his sister Nancy and brother-in-law Don. May God bless and watch over Robbie and his family and on behalf of his Union brothers and sisters, we thank him for his professionalism and his commitment.

A week ago yesterday, we lost retired Madison police chief Vincent Chirico after an eight-month battle with COVID-related illness. A Brooklyn native, Vinnie joined the Madison Police Department in November of 1969 after completing his training. He would spend his entire police career in Madison, earning promotions to Detective, Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain, Deputy Chief before becoming Chief of Police in the year 2004. As Lieutenant, he created the Madison Police Department Emergency Services Union, which is still in operation and was also the department's lead firearms instructor for two decades. He retired in 2009 after 39 years of continual service to the Borough of Madison and its residents. Vinnie exemplified a life dedicated to service, as he was also a member of the Madison Fire Department. Extraordinary.

He leaves behind his wife Joanne, please keep her in your prayers. Daughter Betty, with whom I had the great honor of speaking on Friday, son-in-law Kevin. He's also survived by his father and mother-in-law, Dominic and Betty Carterella, as well as by numerous cousins, Godchildren and friends. And of course, he leaves behind his unofficial families in both the Madison Police and Fire Departments. We thank Vinnie for his service to his community and our state. May God bless him and may he be remembered fondly by all.

Finally today, we remember Mark Blum, who had moved to his home in Point Pleasant Beach only two months before his passing from COVID-19. Mark was only 50. Mark was a physical therapy aide with a practice in Manalapan, but he was also a well-known and beloved member of the Active Day Adult Care Facility in Brick, where he tended to the needs of seniors and adults with disabilities. Mark is survived by

mom, Naomi, please keep her in your prayers, as well as by his brother Adam and his sister and brother-in-law Karen and Andrew, and I have the great honor of speaking with Karen at the end of the week, and their son, Mark's nephew Alex. The entire family called Point Pleasant Beach home, a great New Jersey community.

Mark's career in physical therapy was a perfect fit for someone who is remembered for his kindness and compassion and for not having, and I quote, "a mean bone in his body." He was a model member of our New Jersey family, and may God bless and watch over him and his family.

And may God bless our entire state as we enter this next phase of our battle against COVID. As I've said, tomorrow is a big day but we cannot claim any victory yet. Tomorrow is just the establishment of our beachhead. It's going to take several more months of fighting. So again, Keep up what you have been doing. We have to, this is no time to get lax. This is no time for mistakes. We have to keep pulling together as one state to protect every resident and save every life. But we can do this. We will do this. We must do this.

With that, please help me welcome the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Thank you, Governor and good afternoon. With federal approval and guidance being issued over the weekend, the first tranche of doses of the Pfizer vaccine has been shipped across the United States and vaccine is being delivered to our hospitals. New Jersey expects 76,050 doses in this first round. Approximately 86,000 doses of the Pfizer vaccine are expected next week. The actual doses will be confirmed to us every Saturday. Additional doses will then be coming in the following weeks. There will be three batches of Pfizer vaccine in December. Of the 76,050 doses that we are getting today and tomorrow, about 20,000 will go to long-term care facilities and the remaining 54,000 to hospitals.

During the first week of vaccine availability, as I have shared with you, New Jersey hospitals will be the only points of dispensing and their responsibility will be to vaccinate the paid and unpaid persons serving in their healthcare facilities who have the greatest chance or risk of exposure. 53 acute care hospitals will receive the Pfizer vaccine this week, and 18 will receive the Moderna vaccine when it is approved. It is expected that this Thursday, the Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee, VARBPAC, will review the data of the Moderna vaccine trials and make their recommendations to the Food and Drug Administration. If they recommend the vaccine, the FDA could issue the emergency use authorization as early as Friday, and the Advisory Council on Immunization Practices, ACIP, could make recommendations this weekend. If the CDC posts this guidance in the MMWR shortly after, we could receive our first shipment of Moderna vaccine early next week.

We expect that New Jersey could receive 154,000 doses of the Moderna vaccine in its first shipment. Because this vaccine does not require ultra-cold storage, we have more flexibility on the types of sites that can receive and provide the doses. That allows wider distribution. We're finalizing the distribution sites this week. The initial vaccination partners who will be receiving Moderna first will be the remaining 18 hospitals and community-based providers. We expect 65,000 Moderna doses in their second batch.

As we are still in Phase 1, the focus of the vaccination effort will continue to be healthcare personnel who are defined as paid and unpaid persons serving in healthcare settings who have the potential for direct or indirect exposure to patients or infectious materials. And as previously mentioned in Phase 1A, we will also include long-term care facility residents and staff. These individuals will be vaccinated through the CDC pharmacy partnership for long-term care. That includes CVS Pharmacies and Walgreen Pharmacies.

As Governor Murphy said last week, we are now in the opening scenes of the end of this pandemic. Tomorrow we will witness a moment in history when the first COVID-19 vaccine is administered in our state. We can begin to feel more optimistic that the end is coming but we still have a tough winter ahead of us. That is why it is so important that we continue to remain vigilant. Wear a face covering, stay six feet apart. Stay home when you are sick. Wash your hands frequently. We need to stop the spread of COVID-19.

More positive cases mean more hospitalizations. More hospitalizations mean more stress on the healthcare system that we are relying on to stay strong throughout the second wave. And yes, more hospitalizations will lead to more deaths. So again, as Governor Murphy has said, and I know we are all tired, but we cannot let our guard down.

Moving on to the daily report, as the Governor shared, our hospitals report 3,635 hospitalizations of COVID-19 positive patients and persons under investigation, with 704 or 69% of those critical care patients on ventilators. Fortunately, there are no new reports of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children. There are 65 total cases in our state.

At the veterans homes, there have been four new positives among residents at the Vineland home. There are a total cumulatively of 417 cases among the residents in the veterans homes. At our psych hospitals, the numbers remain the same. Cumulatively, there are 267 cases.

The daily percent positivity as of December 10th for the state is 10.95; the Northern part of the state 10.43%, the Central part of the state 10.90, and the Southern part of the state 12.39. That concludes my daily report. Stay safe and remember, for each of us, for each other, please take the call and download the COVID Alert NJ app. Mask up, socially distance, wash your hands frequently and bask in the joy that you are doing your part to save lives in New Jersey. Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** So well said, Judy. You know one thing I'd love to reiterate that you and I addressed on Friday after our visit to Cooper University Medical Centre and with Debbie Bix from the White House. We've talked about, what's the one thing that we cannot allow to have happen? And that is to have our hospitals to get overrun. We cannot allow that at any cost so I know we monitor that like a hawk, right? I think as we sit here, and Pat, you're part of this. We feel very good about a lot of our capacities. PPE, ventilators, beds, I'd like more testing for sure, but all of that feels like we've got, you know, whether it's millions or thousands of pieces that we feel, but the one area where we have said time and again, I was back and forth texting with one of the healthcare union leaders this morning, or just before I came over rather -- the one capacity that we're very concerned about are healthcare workers, for two reasons.

One is the here inside the four walls in New Jersey they've gotten sick, sadly some we've lost; mental health stress, PTSD, however you want to put it, there's an enormous strain. The second reason is we don't have the bullpen that we had in the spring where we were on fire, but the rest of the country was not yet on fire and we pulled people in from around the country and in some cases around the world. That's not a luxury for us right now. So we're running, you know, at the bone.

The reason I say all this, to repeat, other than saving their lives and acknowledging their heroism, one of the big benefits of vaccinating our healthcare workers beginning tomorrow morning in this first wave is we recreate the bullpen. I can't tell you that that goes all the way toward mental health and all the other challenges that are real and our heroic healthcare workers are facing, but there's a rationale to that that is not just the obvious one, but the indirect one, and that's going to go a long way. So God bless each and every one of our healthcare workers.

Pat, we've got a lot on compliance. We've got a lot on weather. Over to you. Thank you for everything.

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. With regards to compliance, in Paterson, police responded to Kilveo's Pub and cited the manager for EO violations; in McCutcheon, police responded to a large house party which allegedly the parents were aware of and departed the residence. Both parents were charged as was the 16-year-old juvenile who hosted the party. On Thursday and Friday of last week, ABC went out on inspections on Thursday, they conducted 66 COVID-19 compliance inspections and cited three: Foxtails Lounge in Manville was cited, Cheers Sports Bar and Cafe located in Bound Brook was cited, as was the Hamilton Tavern in Hamilton. On Friday, they conducted 48 compliance inspections and cited six establishments. Those six were as follows: Fielder's Pub in Winslow Township, Twisted Tavern at Pinelands Golf Club, also in Winslow; Paul's Tavern in Lindenwold; Cafe Aldo Lamberti in Cherry Hill; Viera Bar and Grill in Cherry Hill, and the Laughing Fox Tavern, located in Magnolia.

With regards to the weather, as the Governor mentioned in his opening remarks, we are monitoring that with the National Weather Service. I will have a call tomorrow afternoon with all 21 County OEM Coordinators as well as the National Weather Service. The modelling right now is there's a little bit of uncertainty and the degree of confidence we're unsure of, but it looks, as the Governor stated, that the northern part of the state, just to give you a few estimations. North of I-78, 12 to 18 inches; South of 78 to the I-95 corridor, also 12 to 18; between I-95 and 195, 4 to 12; and the southeast part of the state, south of 195, anywhere from 2 to 6 inches. Again, we'll continue to monitor that. I've been on the phone the past few days with Commissioner Scaccetti from DOT. Our teams are ready. There's also going to be some high winds, and the storm is expected to go into late Wednesday night. Those high winds may impact this as well with drifting.

As we always say, if you don't have to be out there, don't be out there. If you are, just be prepared. Charged cell phone, full tank of gas, but we're ready, Governor.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Pat, I would just say a couple of things on that front, other than the compliance list grows. I don't think we should confuse the fact that the list is growing with more folks who are misbehaving. Again, overwhelmingly, restauranteurs, gym operators to pick two categories, are doing the right thing under extreme duress. I think what it does is that as we've focused with governors like this, we have no choice but to ramp up enforcement and that's what you're seeing.

Secondly, on the weather, a couple of thoughts. COVID cuts both ways, Judy, on the weather front. Number one, it requires certain protocols in place, I think it's largely close proximity and capacity even of the folks in DOT, state police and others who are going to do battle with Mother Nature. On the other hand, we still are far below peak road travel and rail travel. That probably is the case via <https://www.blessing.com/add/philmurphy>

Last comment on weather, this has the potential to be a real whopper. If you listen to Pat, again, this is all subject to Mother Nature, right? If we could predict Mother Nature to the minute, we would have done that a long time ago. We can't. But if you believe what we're seeing right now, you'll probably have no issue -- I am going out on a limb here -- getting to work in the morning or getting to school in the morning, but your challenge will be potentially getting home. I would just ask, and as we learn more about this we'll communicate it. Think that through. Don't get hung out by feeling some amount of confidence that you were able to get there, but then getting hung up on getting safely back. God willing, you'll get back, but we need you to be doing that safely. And again, we'll continue to communicate aggressively on this, not just on today's, this afternoon's lighter event, but still with potential slickness and a couple inches up north but also more importantly as we pivot into Wednesday.

We will be with you virtually tomorrow, although as I already said, Judy and I will be at University Hospital bright and early tomorrow morning to witness history. We'll be with you Wednesday. This is somewhat subject to weather, but assume it's one o'clock on Wednesday. We're backed up this afternoon, so we're going to ask each of you to stick to one or two questions. We have a lot of you in the room. Happy to have you, but we're under the gun both because of the Electoral College and we've got another White House video call hosted by the Vice President later on today.

I spoke to the President on Friday. That was a very narrow conversation, as it relates to federal declaration of emergency for Tropical Storm Isaias which we got, I'm happy to say. I put another request in on something else. But I believe today's video call is probably entirely on vaccines this afternoon. With that, Stacey, is it really you this time or no? It really is, okay. Fire away.

Q&A Session

**Stacey Berchenger, Bergen Record:** Thank you, Governor. Just to clarify, those 76,000 doses in the state of New Jersey, do we have them? Are they still on the way? If so, which hospitals have received them and were there any surprises in the delivery process?

Governor, will you mandate that first responders take the vaccine? If so, how do you plan to do that? Would it be an Executive Order or something else?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Last question, please, because we're backed up here and I want to make sure we're staying on schedule.

**Stacey Berchenger, Bergen Record:** Sure. We're getting lots of questions from folks, especially people who would be sort of at additional risk of the virus, asking where they can sign up to get the vaccine. What would you say to those people?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you for the question, Stacey. Judy, At least Sharif, I know, has got them. I believe they're here but you tell me.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Yeah, we do know that University Hospital and I believe Hackensack University Hospital has also received theirs. We have someone guarding a website, the comptroller, and it's checked every hour and then we can tell organizations the approximate time of delivery. As of this morning, nine o'clock, they were the two that were in the queue and University already got theirs.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Stacey, your question though allows me to make a point about the South. The storm. We're also very much watching how the contours of the storm play out in terms of delivery of the vaccine, which is going to be a later week event. At the moment, Judy, unless you tell me you've made a call this morning that I was unaware, we're not going to mandate first responders but we want them to come to this of their own free will. We believe, more importantly for what I believe, Judy and Tina and their teams including independent experts who have no skin in the game, as it were, have said that this is safe and we need to take it. Is that fair to say?

I've had many exchanges over the past several days, my friends and I were back and forth this morning with folks who have, for instance, are on chemotherapy. I think it's fair to say this was another big topic of conversation on Friday with Debbie Birx and others. The 1A community is very clear, healthcare workers, long-term care residents and staff. The 1B community is a much larger community with many different elements and many different communities within that community. That is a work in progress. Thank you. Sir, real quick, thank you.

**Reporter:** How you doing, Governor? Very quickly, first one, with the vaccine being put out in whole within the next few months, are we having a procedure or are a policy and procedure for scammers whether it's mailers, emails, phone calls, that sort of thing?

And then two for South Jersey, very quickly. When do you see it coming down south, cover Cape May, Atlanta County and whatnot, the vaccine? And also with tourism dollars, April, a layout pretty much of the state hopefully, do you see anything being done with a plan for tourism dollars to get folks down by the shore late spring, early summer?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I will start by -- so your question is what are we doing to prevent scammers and people taking advantage of this? Jared Maples is here. I won't necessarily drag you into the conversation but this is something that he and Pat Callahan, our Office of Homeland Security, we monitor this aggressively, the Attorney General right alongside. And by the way, like every other inflection moment in society, there's usually a very small number, but they're out there, of bad actors trying to take advantage of it. We saw that in the spring with people scamming with PPE and ventilators. I'm sure we're going to see it with misinformation.

When will the vaccine hit the South? Cooper Medical has got it and they're starting tomorrow.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Cooper and Atlantic City.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Cooper and Atlantic Health, right?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Yes.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** So the answer is, it is there. I think you heard from Judy. This is, you throw the stone in the water and you start to see the ripples and the waves go out from there. Slowly but surely, different communities, different hospitals, different geographies?

Yeah, listen, I was on with a faith leader today sort of talking about, where do we think we are at Easter? I know you didn't ask about Easter, but that's April 4th of 2021. I think that's the front end of a much better, much more open period of time, God willing. So April/May seems to me to be the period that we've both got much more broad access to the vaccine epidemic, epidemiological curves, unless Tina tells me otherwise, will have God willing long crested, the weather will be getting warmer. I put a lot of optimism into that period, and that goes for everywhere in the state. That certainly includes the shore. It'll, I hope, explode in the right way back to some amount of normalcy on Memorial Day weekend, as it normally does and I will be right there to kick it off. Thank you. Brent, good afternoon.

**Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger:** Good afternoon. Why did the state wait until tomorrow to administer its first vaccine when others did today? Is there any chance the 10:00 p.m. curfew on indoor dining will be lifted for New Year's Eve? Mayor de Blasio said today New Yorkers should prepare for another potential shutdown in the city. Should New Jersey residents also prep for something similar?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** So tomorrow, we want to make sure at every step of the way that we get this exactly right. I don't know how else to put it. Sharif, by the way, who I do have to remind everyone was Judy's predecessor, so he knows both sides of the trade here. Sharif is not alone here. All the leaders of the other six big hospitals that are going to be open for business (https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy) right.

I do not see at this moment, and I don't want to burst people's bubbles, I do not see -- New Year's Eve is two weeks from Thursday, am I right? I don't see it. I know that's not going to make a lot of people happy, I'm hoping, Brent, that we're not going to have to go through one of these, pull the garage doors down. I hope we can remain surgical, use a scalpel, go in as we have done (https://www.usapd.com/address/philmurphy) enforcement, as you're hearing from Pat. Go into areas where we know there is transmission and pick that off, and then plead with folks with our bully pulpits that you've got to stay small for the holidays.

We are right now, I'm not suggesting that February 1st is Nirvana by any means. I don't want anyone to misread that. But we get through the next six weeks, we're going to, I believe, have the worst behind us, particularly when you factor in what will be an increased, I won't say logarithmic Judy, but the vaccine availability is going to go up meaningfully over the next six weeks, with each week, from each of these providers. Thank you, sir. Nothing? I owe you a 20. Alex, let the record show everyone witnessed that exchange.

**Alex Napoliello, NJ.com:** All right. Just a quick clarification for the Commissioner of Health. You mentioned another case or cases in Vineland. Can you just talk a little bit more about that? How it was discovered? How many? What actions are being taken?

For the Colonel, we've heard bits and pieces about security around the distribution of the vaccine. Can you go a little bit more into that? Are there any concerns that folks with ill intent might try to do something to impede the spread of this particular vaccine?

Lastly, for the Governor, you were on with Governor Wolf this morning and there was a question about indoor dining in Pennsylvania versus New Jersey. I wanted to put it to you again because I didn't feel like we got a fulsome answer. What exactly about Pennsylvania versus New Jersey's indoor dining realities are different? What data are you looking at that allows you to keep indoor dining open, albeit at 25%, while Governor Wolf has closed down his entire state?


**Governor Phil Murphy:** The first question I'm not sure I understood Alex. But did you get that Judy? You're up.





**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** I get a report every day on every positive case of all of the veterans homes. Obviously, there's a big focus on Vineland. If someone is symptomatic, they're tested immediately. There's asymptomatic testing going on every week, twice a week. If someone tests positive, they are immediately cohorted, separated out from the other residents. All the other residents are then tested, anyone they came in contact with. All of the prevention activities that we recommend are being handled. They are also part of our testing pilot, where we're testing everyone that goes into these

residences and we're finding asymptomatic spread from employee groups is pretty high, so we're going to try to get more testing supplies from the federal government to continue that pilot, and that's throughout the state. A big focus on all of the long-term care facilities, but specifically on our veterans homes.

Interestingly, Vineland, as you recall, during the last surge had no cases. The cases were all in Paramus. Paramus right now has no resident cases, Vineland has them. It just talks about the spread of the disease throughout the state.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy, on our Christmas wish list, a lot more Binax Now tests so that you could do that at the door with all of our long-term care centers. Remember, again, these are parallel realities, there are a lot of moving parts here. These are parallel realities. Now that vaccines are getting rolled out in the very places Judy has asked the HHS and the feds for more of the Binax Now.

Pat, on the second question, I would just say and then turn to you, and then I'll come back on dining. Clearly security in this particular moment is a very high priority. I think we feel good about the security but we also don't take anything for granted. As I said a minute ago, bad actors live for these inflection moments in society. Thoughts?  (<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>)

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:**  (<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy>)  (<https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice>)  (<https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>)  (<https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>)  
Modifying it. There's a concern over, but there's also a high degree of confidence. Director Maples, our State Police, Personnel the Office of Target Hardening, which does assessments with regards to vulnerabilities, our local county law enforcement, totally on top of the information that we're sharing as to where these points of distribution should be and the security recommendations that are made around it. So a high degree of confidence, but certainly a concern, too.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** And we will continue to take this seriously, particularly in these early weeks when there's a scarcity. There's a big supply/demand imbalance. That levels out, obviously, over time over the next several months.

Yeah, indoor dining again, I want to step back and say, and I can't speak to Pennsylvania -- Tom Wolf has been a great partner, by the way, as have Andrew Cuomo and other governors. We've shared common principles and values throughout this crisis. And I think, Judy, you and your colleagues and Pat, you and your counterparts have done a similar thing. But that doesn't mean we move in lockstep, first of all. We've done different things at different moments within the context of broad harmony.

Secondly, remember, we were among the last states in America to open up indoor dining, and we never got above 25%. I believe this is still true in New York State today, even though New York City is shutting down inside, if you're on Long Island or Westchester County, I think it's still at 50% capacity. By the way, that for the most part looks more like a lot of communities in New Jersey, we're still at 25.

Thirdly, as we've said many times, when you do more things inside than I do, you've got a higher risk of exposure and potentially getting this, particularly when you have to, by definition, take this off when you're eating or drinking. So you're taking on more risk, we know that. The question is, do we see substantial indoor spread related to those activities? The answer is we don't. It is one thing to take on an increased amount of risk and knowing that's just part of the what goes with it when you open up indoors, particularly indoor dining. But we're not going to do something to make us feel good if we don't have the data that supports it.

As I said, That's not to say that you can't have cases here or there, because I'm sure with that risk, that is a fact. But we do not see the sustained increase transmission that would lead us to take that step. It would also allow me, before we go to the gentlemen to your left there, it allows me to also make the plea to the federal government, to Congress, to the administration, we need federal stimulus right now, in the worst way. It's long overdue. If you could magically create a financial lifeline that would be a game changer for a restaurant, a small business, a gym, or an indoor entertainment setting, well then we probably have a lot more latitude at that point. We do not have that latitude right now.

I mentioned this also earlier that a financial stimulus is not just a bridge over these treacherous weeks, maybe a few months. But when we start to recover and we get that bounce, the question is what shape will that person be in who's unemployed? Or the restaurant owner or the small business owner? What shape are they going to be in? What shape is the state or local municipality going to be in at that moment when the bounce begins, when that uptick occurs? And if all you're going to do in that period of bouncing up is to struggle to get back on your feet, versus you are on your feet, you had some amount of strength and then you bounce from there, that's a completely different recovery. It's that latter one that we are desperate for. That's why we need the federal money.

Thank you, sir. Good afternoon.

**Reporter:** No question, Governor. You owe me a \$20.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Okay and bless your heart. Elise, good afternoon. Again, I'll slip another \$20 there in due course.

**Elise Young, Bloomberg:** Good afternoon.



(<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>)

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Hey, Elise.



(<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy>)

**Elise Young, Bloomberg:** Hi. We're more than two weeks beyond Thanksgiving. Numbers have grown but not spiked dramatically. Have we seen the extent of Thanksgiving transmission, or are you still expecting a big jump? What is the reality versus any models you may have studied? Thank you.



(<https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice>)



(<https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>)

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Great question. I said this, I think on Friday, Judy, I was struck by Debbie Birx saying that she thought we wouldn't see the full impact of Thanksgiving till mid to late this week, which would put it, I guess, three weeks. Tina, you may want to weigh in here. And I agree with you in terms of the numbers are up, but they're not, you know, they're in a range; hospitalizations, positive, we don't like any of it but it's not jumping from one day to the next. Tina, what's your view? Are we still waiting for a few more days to get the final readout?



(<https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>)

**State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan:** Yeah, you know, we also have to keep in mind that sometimes, you know, we might have some delays in reporting as well from our laboratory. That's why we cautiously wait. We like to wait and monitor the trends. But that said, we have another holiday coming up, we can't let our guard down. Even though a vaccine is so close, you know, we still cannot let down our guard because we still have a ways to go.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** What I don't know, Elise – thank you, Tina – is whether or not on this particular day relative to model A or B, where we are relative to what it said, we can come back to you on that. I still think we're at the tail end of the aftermath but we're not, perhaps, all the way there. Would you feel comfortable with that? Thank you. We'll go to Dave and then Nikita. Thank you.

**David Matthau, NJ 101.5:** Hi, Governor. You had mentioned you're confident in the FDA approval of the vaccine. Have experts in New Jersey looked at this data, reviewed it, made a similar kind of assessment or are we just relying on the feds on this?

Second question, how important is the expected delivery of the Moderna vaccine shortly thereafter the Pfizer? How much of a benefit will this be for the state? That's the only questions I have. Am I also eligible for a possible \$20? Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I think we'll give you \$12.50 for that, but thank you. I'll let Judy answer in terms of the independent assessments that she and her team have made. I think the Moderna adding on to the Pfizer development is a huge deal. Moderna is less complicated on the cold chain storage piece too. So it's a minus 20 Celsius, Pfizer's minus 70. I always get the days mixed up, which one is 21 and which one is 28? Pfizer's 21, Moderna's 28, so that's a little bit more complicated. I think it's a game changer. But I'll leave it to the experts and also, Judy, any other independent assessments that you want to talk about in New Jersey.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** We have a professional advisory committee that's been meeting since March, twice a week. They are reviewing the recommendations that VIRBAC and ACIP have sent to the FDA to gain more knowledge, their own knowledge about the trials, and the results of the trials, to advise us of any cautions. Basically, it's not a total independent review. It's a review of the recommending advisory groups. They are headed by Dr. Eddy Bresnitz, our former state epidemiologist who worked in the vaccine development industry after he left the state, very knowledgeable infectious disease specialists and physicians from throughout New Jersey, north to south, representing broad race and ethnicity backgrounds, communities of color. They've been working diligently, and we also have bioethicists. They've been working diligently twice a week since March to make sure that any information that's brought forth, whether it's by me through a forum like this, or anything the department puts forth, has been scrutinized and is almost pristine knowledge.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy, I'm calling an audible. Dan Bryan, you should witness. I wonder if we should have Eddy or some representative with us one of these days.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** That'd be great. It's really an August group. (<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>)

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yeah, I think it may be, Dave, get credit for, we'll try to get it closer to \$20, but I think it actually may be a comfort to folks to hear from inside of our state. Again, this is one of Tim's predecessors and has been very valuable. Folks may not recall this because it's been a few months. Eddy has been with us on a couple of occasions at this press conference, but he hasn't been here in a while. I think that might give some folks some comfort. Thank you for that. (<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy>) (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/governorsoffice>) (<https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>)

**Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe:** Hi, Governor. So the State Bar Association on Sunday said that it was backing a bill to eliminate mandatory minimums for a series of crimes, including for official misconduct. I know you've spoken against the inclusion of official misconduct in that measure before. I'm wondering if the Bar Association's stance changes your thinking at all. (<https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>)

Separately, I'm wondering if that bill passes in the assembly as it already has in the Senate, whether you would conditionally veto it.

Still separately, Senate President Steve Sweeney today said that he might be okay with a version of the bill that exempts or rather, keeps the minimums in place for elected officials. Would you be more favorable to a measure like that?

And then separately, if you'll have them, I am wondering if you are playing any role in raising money for the Democratic Senate candidates in Georgia?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Okay. Stacey's going to be mad at me because I let him go one more, so I owe you one. Dan Bryan will cash in. Everyone has the choice of an extra question or another \$20. Pat will keep track of that. I know what the State Bar -- I'm not going to comment, Nikita. You won't be mad at me because you know I won't comment on the specifics of what's passed the Assembly or not, or the Senate President's comments.

I will say this. There's been an enormous amount of back and forth on general matters with the Senate President and the Speaker and their teams. I continue to applaud the spirit of goodwill on a lot of stuff right now. There's a lot of moving parts, as I said. This is one of these weeks that tests the ability to walk and chew gum.


I continue to be where I've been on this. I'm happy to have a conversation about it, and I mean that sincerely. I'm not sure where I am on it but it was not part of the spirit of the commission that we stood up within a matter of days of my becoming governor, chaired by former Supreme Court Chief Justice Debbie Poritz, former President of NOBLE, National Organization of Black Law Enforcement, Jiles Ship, representatives, by the way, from the Legislature. A lot of interest groups were represented as part of that commission. The spirit of that was embodied in their recommendations, some of which we were able to take through executive action, as you'll recall; some of which need legislative action. That was just not part

of the spirit, it was not part of the recommendations and that was not the spirit of the commission. So again, I'm happy to have a conversation about it but boy, I would like to see this happen as it was intended to happen.

I'm not part of any fundraising operation for the State of Georgia in either Senate race. That may change, I suppose, but at the moment, at least, I'm not. With that, I think we mask up, Madam Commissioner. Again, a modest but real concern on weather today, far more than modest and real concern on weather on Wednesday into Thursday, particularly, I think, middle of the day onward. But be careful out there tonight. I think particularly if you're up north tonight, right? Slicker roads, potential for a couple of inches of precipitation. We've got a huge day tomorrow. I'll see you at University Hospital, Judy. This is, I do think the beginning of the end but the end period here probably lasts a number of months, as we've already discussed. I'm not sure it's necessarily Nirvana at the end, but it's light years different than what we're dealing with right now. We have to continue to need to plead with everybody, particularly we're in the final days of Hanukkah. We've got Advent, Kwanzaa, Christmas and New Year's before us, all within the next three weeks. Please God, everybody. Just, I know it stinks but celebrate small, single digits, your immediate family, preferably. Do the basic stuff that we know works. Don't let your guard down. It's tempting to do it. You're tired of this. I am. We all are. But don't do it. And just because the vaccine is coming, it's coming and it's real and there's more than one and that's great, I hope there's even more than two. The reality is that that will take time for it to take effect, so we've got to stay strong, folks. God bless you all.

## Governor Phil Murphy

 (<https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>)

 (<https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>)

[Home \(/governor/\)](/governor/)

### Administration

[Governor Phil Murphy \(/governor/admin/about/\)](/governor/admin/about/)

[Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver \(/governor/admin/lt/\)](/governor/admin/lt/)

[First Lady Tammy Snyder Murphy \(/governor/admin/fl/\)](/governor/admin/fl/)

[Cabinet \(/governor/admin/cabinet/\)](/governor/admin/cabinet/)

[Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency](/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml)

[\(/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml\)](/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml)

[Boards, Commissions & Authorities \(/governor/admin/bca/\)](/governor/admin/bca/)

[Internship Opportunities \(/governor/admin/internship.shtml\)](/governor/admin/internship.shtml)

[Governor's Residence - Drumthwacket \(http://drumthwacket.org/\)](http://drumthwacket.org/)

### Key Initiatives

[Economy & Jobs \(/governor/initiatives/#Economy\)](/governor/initiatives/#Economy)

[Education \(/governor/initiatives/#Education\)](/governor/initiatives/#Education)

[Environment \(/governor/initiatives/#Environment\)](/governor/initiatives/#Environment)

[Health \(/governor/initiatives/#Health\)](/governor/initiatives/#Health)

[Law & Justice \(/governor/initiatives/#Justice\)](/governor/initiatives/#Justice)

[Transportation \(/governor/initiatives/#Transportation\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

## News & Events

[Press Releases \(/governor/news/news/562022/approved/news\\_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/news/562022/approved/news_archive.shtml)

[Photos \(https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy\)](https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy)

[Public Addresses \(/governor/news/addresses\)](/governor/news/addresses)

[Executive Orders \(/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo\\_archive.html\)](/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html)

[Administrative Orders \(/governor/news/ao/approved/ao\\_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml)

[Direct Appointments \(/governor/news/appointments\)](/governor/news/appointments)



[\(https://twitter.com/GovMurphy\)](https://twitter.com/GovMurphy)

[Advice and Consent Appointments \(/governor/news/acappointments\)](/governor/news/acappointments)



[\(https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy\)](https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy)

[Statements on Legislation](/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml)



[\(https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice\)](https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice)

[\(/governor/news/statements/approved/statements\\_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml)



[\(https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/\)](https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/)

[Administration Reports \(/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml)



[\(https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy\)](https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy)

[Transition Reports \(/governor/news/reports/approved/reports\\_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml)

[Press Kits \(/governor/news/press\)](/governor/news/press)

## Social

[Facebook \(https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy/\)](https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy/)

[Twitter \(https://twitter.com/GovMurphy\)](https://twitter.com/GovMurphy)

[Instagram \(https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/\)](https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/)

[Snapchat \(https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy\)](https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy)

[YouTube \(https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice\)](https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice)

[TikTok \(https://www.tiktok.com/@njgov?\)](https://www.tiktok.com/@njgov?)

## Contact Us

[Scheduling Requests \(/governor/contact/scheduling/\)](/governor/contact/scheduling/)

[Contact Us \(/governor/contact/all/\)](/governor/contact/all/)

## Statewide

[NJ Home \(//www.nj.gov\)](http://www.nj.gov)

[Services A to Z \(//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/njgov/alphaserv.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/gov/njgov/alphaserv.html)

[Departments/Agencies \(//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/deptserv/\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/gov/deptserv/)

**FAQs ([//www.nj.gov/faqs/](https://www.nj.gov/faqs/))**

**Contact Us ([//www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html](https://www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html))**

**Privacy Notice ([//www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html](https://www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html))**

**Legal Statement & Disclaimers ([//www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html](https://www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html))**

**Accessibility Statement ([//www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html](https://www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html))**



(<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>)



(<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy>)



(<https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice>)



(<https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>)



(<https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>)

([//nj.gov/opra/](https://nj.gov/opra/))

(<https://my.state.nj.us/openam/UI/Login>)

Copyright © State of New Jersey, 1996-2023

Office of Governor PO Box 001

Trenton, NJ 08625

609-292-6000

(<https://tech.nj.gov/>)