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Governor Phil Murphy



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TRANSCRIPT: November 2nd, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media



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Governor Phil Murphy: Good afternoon, everybody. I think we have concluded that we are able to safely get back together in our usual spot in the War Memorial, we're going to sanitize the entire space yet again completely. But I think our leaning right now, folks unless you hear otherwise from my hand or Dan, is to be with you in our regular format in person in the war memorial and again, that'll be Thursday at one o'clock unless we are otherwise.

Good afternoon, everybody. Again with me today, as they almost always are, the woman who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli; another guy who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police Pat Callahan. We have another familiar face and that is the Department of Health's Communicable Disease Service Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz, good to have you back, Ed. And today we are also honored to be joined by the Chief Administrator of the Motor Vehicles Commission, Sue Fulton. Sue, great to have you. You can also see Parimal Garg, Chief Counsel, is up on the screen with us.

Now, Sue has joined us several times before to update us on the progress of the MVC and clearing up the months' long backlog of transactions, and ensuring that all customers can have their business attended to in a timely fashion. She's here with us today with another update. I don't want to steal Sue's thunder, and I



know she will go deeper into the details but I do want to leave you with some facts on the MVC today.

The MVC is completing more transactions month over month than they were before the pandemic began, and that's a good thing. They are reaching out to and engaging with more customers through more targeted communications and social media, alerting residents to the fact that most of their transactions can be completed at home and don't even require a trip to an MVC agency.

Overall, the number of user sessions on the njmvc.gov website, you can see that at the bottom of the screen, is up nearly threefold from all of 2019. The number of transactions now being completed online is more than doubled from last year, from 21% all the way up to 44% of all transactions and two-thirds of all renewals are now being completed online, and that's a good thing.

And at agencies I know folks are frustrated, believe me, I am. Sue and her team are but the wait times in person have also continued to improve. Again, please hear this. There is no need to camp out overnight. As the MVC begins shifting to an appointment-based system, which Sue will discuss, the fact is that at the majority of agencies, customers showing up after 10:00 a.m., or in many cases 11:00 a.m., are still able to have their transaction handled that day. As I said Sue will cover all of this and more in her report in a few minutes. Again, I want to thank her and all of the women and men at the MVC for their dogged work to clear the backlog and ensure customers are served in an orderly and timely fashion.

We are not spiking any footballs here. Trust me, we all get it. Sue and team are working morning noon and night to plow through this but we also want to be honest about the facts, and the facts are thankfully going in the right direction.

Next up, as we know, tomorrow is Election Day but we've really been in an entire election season to ensure that everyone was given a chance to safely and securely vote and to have their voices heard. As of the latest numbers, you can see them up on the screen. These are the latest available before we came out. You've got 3,544,719 votes have already been received, that's as of noon today. That's just about 90% of the entire total vote in the 2016 Presidential. We've got a private wager, Mahen and I, as to what that number will look like at the end of the day but it is safe to say that this election will be an all-time record turnout. More ballots will arrive and will continue to be processed today so we know this total will go up.

At this point. I want to say this, this is the first time I've said this, we would discourage anyone from putting their ballot in the mail with only one day to go. You may still use one of the secure dropboxes in your county, or you may hand deliver your completed ballot to a poll worker at your local polling place tomorrow, as long as you do it by 8:00 p.m. But again, at this point, do not put your ballot in the mail.

And contrary to what some elected officials have irresponsibly said, you can vote in-person tomorrow in a polling place in your community. If you choose to vote in person, you will cast a paper provisional ballot. To be clear, anybody telling you that you can't vote in person is just wrong. They are not telling the truth. You can vote In person tomorrow.

Every eligible voter in New Jersey has been given the opportunity to vote, and it is likely, as I mentioned a few minutes ago, we will see the highest number of total votes cast in an election in our state's history. It just proves that when you open up access to the ballot and welcome every eligible voter, and don't try to find ways to disenfranchise voters, our democracy is made stronger. And by the way, at the same time, while looking out as we always have, first and foremost, for public health.

Today, I'm also signing an Executive Order that will move the date of the Perth Amboy runoff election by one week to Tuesday, December 15th, should a runoff be necessary. As with the general election that we've been in the middle of, all active registered voters in Perth Amboy will receive a vote-by-mail ballot, which can be returned either via the mail or a secure dropbox located within the city, and voters will maintain the ability to show up in person on December 15th and cast a paper provisional ballot. But again, back to tomorrow. I thank every voter who has grabbed their opportunity to have their voice heard in this election and your vote will be counted, period.

Next, open enrollment. Under New Jersey State-run Healthcare Exchange under the Affordable Care Act is now open. We opened for business yesterday. If you need an affordable healthcare plan for 2021, go to the website, getcovered.nj.gov today to review plan options and learn if you qualify for financial assistance. Open enrollment will be twice as long this year as it was last year. It'll run through January 31st. But, why wait? There's no reason not to go online today and find an affordable health plan that works for you and it works for your family.

And finally, before we return our attention to the overnight numbers, a quick reminder that all the details of the Executive Order I signed last week setting workplace safety standards are available at covid19.nj.gov/safe. I encourage all workers and employers to go there. That order, by the way, takes effect this Thursday morning at 6:00 a.m.

Now let's shift gears and look at the overnight numbers. We're reporting today another 1,379 positive cases, our cumulative total since March 4th is now 240,997. The positivity for all tests recorded on October 29th was 5.29%. That's higher than we would like, for sure. It's a little bit higher than the past couple of days and it's in that sort of 4% to 6% range again, which is too high for our taste. (The rate of transmission today) sits at 1.28. That's about where it's been the past number of days.

Overall, we appear to have had a quiet Halloween, albeit with several exceptions of a few large parties that were broken up by local officials. Pat will get into a little bit of pre-color on that. But those knuckleheads aside, I thank the overwhelming majority of you who celebrated safely, and especially those of you who took extra precautions to keep trick-or-treaters and their families safe as well. I'm really heartened that so many of you are taking seriously the need and the responsibility to help us beat back this second wave.

Now that we're in November, I know everyone is starting to think about Thanksgiving; I know we are in our house. We'll have much more to say on this over the coming weeks but again, this is an uncommon year and this won't be the year for traveling to large family gatherings. As I've said before, this is the year to gather around a smaller table so we can hope to be able to gather around a bigger one next year.

Now turning back to the numbers. In our hospitals last night, a total of 1,109 patients were being treated, 947 of whom were known COVID positive and another 162 awaiting confirmation of their status. That is the sixth day in a row that we had been above 1,000 folks in our hospitals. Of that group, 212 were in intensive care and 100 ventilators were in use. Sadly, and again this is apples to oranges but to give you a spot sense that Judy and I always try to leave you with, 20 patients passed in our hospitals yesterday. Now they're not part of the numbers I'll turn to in a second and they still need to be confirmed but that's the first time, Judy, we've been at 20 in quite some time.

Today on the confirmed, with a heavy heart, the confirmed losses of life, we had three additional COVID-19 related. That brings our statewide total to 14,564, and another 1,793 deaths are still listed as probable. Of the three new cases and three new sad losses of life, they are from October 12th, October 24th, and October 27th respectively. You've heard that from us lately. There was a time -- and Ed Lifshitz has lived this, so he forgot more about this than I know -- there was a time when the bulk of the confirmed fatalities we were reporting were still, we were making up for lost time way back when. That still is occasionally the case but if you listened to the past handful of press conferences, the fatalities that we're reporting are much more proximate to the date that we are making those known.

So as we do every day, let's join together and remember three more of the blessed souls from New Jersey we have lost.

We begin today by honoring Dr. Charles Goodstein of Tenafly. He was 82 years old. Dr. Goodstein grew up across the Hudson in Manhattan and was a graduate of both Columbia University and the University of Pittsburgh Medical School. He served our nation in the Air Force, rising to the rank of captain, but when he returned from his military service, he started a practice as an adult and child psychoanalyst in Tenafly and called the borough for the rest of his life. Throughout his career, he served as a clinical professor on the staff of the NYU Medical School, teaching as part of the Psychoanalytic Association of New York.

While he achieved success professionally, his family and friends kept him grounded, and he dedicated his life as much to bettering their lives as he did his patients and students. They'll all remember him as a man who love both a good joke and a good argument, who found joy in art and music. Especially, by the way, when a good parking spot right out front could be had. He was a guy who never gave up on the Yankees, and never passed up a good piece of dark chocolate.

Dr. Goodstein leaves behind his wife of 58 years, Dr. Carolyn Goodstein, and I had the incredible honor of speaking with her at the end of the week, and by the way, she also lost her brother Steven to COVID. Steven lived in Florida. He also leaves behind his children Katherine, who's an obstetrician in New York, and his son Clifford, also who hangs his hat in New York, and his two beloved grandchildren, Piper and Nolan. He also leaves behind four nieces and nephews, and many cousins. And of course, he leaves behind many dear friends and grateful patients. May Dr. Goldstein's memory be a blessing for his family and all who knew him, and I want to also thank him for his service to our great nation. God bless him.

Next up, we remember Edward Masilunas Sr., a longtime resident of both Verona and Upper Montclair. Born and raised in Pittsburgh, Ed was commissioned a second lieutenant in the United States Army and proudly served our nation in the Korean War. When he returned home, he went on to finish his degree at the University of Pittsburgh, before moving east to take a job for the Westinghouse Electric Company. After working many years for Westinghouse and others, he opened his own successful wholesale packaging business called PacQuest in 1993. The preferred packaging designs that have become the standard in the painting, building materials and food industries.

By his side, through it all, that gal on the left of the screen was his wife of 60 years, Joyce. Ed was 89 years old when he passed and just one week later, Joyce too passed from COVID-19, Joyce was 84 years old. Ed and Joyce leaves behind their four children, Cindy, with whom I had the great honor of speaking, she's in Montclair; Dina is in Roseland, Lisa is in Cedar Grove, and their son Edward Jr, who's in Pittsburgh. And by the way, both of them, Ed and Joyce, have been laid to rest in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The kids also had their spouses, and their nine grandchildren they left behind: Robert, Emily, Justin, Jake, Jason, Katherine, Jack, Owen and Grace. We are grateful to both Ed and Joyce for choosing to make New Jersey their home for so many years. We thank him for his service to our nation. May God bless them both and watch over their souls and their family.


Finally for today, we remember Jersey City's Elaine Cunningham White-Gardner. Elaine was born and raised in Jersey City, the seventh of nine children. At first she was a licensed practical nurse, but the pull of social justice moved her to change course and she found her calling as an educator. Completing her schoolwork at night so she could watch her children during the day, Elaine earned the first degree in Black Studies ever awarded by Jersey City University. That's right, she received the first degree in Black Studies ever awarded by Jersey City University. She then went on to teach African American History of both Henry Snyder High School and Dr. Robert McNair Academic High School before being named Assistant Principal of Public School No. 39 and serving as the District Supervisor for Social Studies.





She retired from a storied educational career in 1996. Throughout that career, she fought to expand job opportunities for minorities throughout Jersey City Schools and earned numerous accolades, including being named one of Jersey Journal's Women of Achievement. It shouldn't be any surprise she found a calling in public service. Her late brother and a guy I used to know quite well, Glenn, served as the first African American Mayor of Jersey City, as well as State Senator. And her sister-in-law, with whom I had the great honor of speaking last week and a great leader in her own right, Senator Sandra Cunningham continues building upon the Cunningham legacy.

Elaine, in addition to her sister-in-law Senator Cunningham, is survived by her three boys, Peter, Troy and Derek, and their families, including 13 grandchildren. She also leaves three surviving siblings, brothers Richard and Gerard and her sister Diane. She's also survived by numerous nieces and nephews, siblings in-law, as I mentioned, cousins and of course, devoted friends and thankful former colleagues and students. We too thank Elaine for her years of service to Jersey City, and for answering that call to be an educator. God bless and watch over her.

Three, in fact four if you include Joyce, extraordinary lives lost. Let's redouble our efforts and do all we can to save every life we can.

Now turning as we do to highlight the small businesses working alongside the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, today I'd like to introduce Lucas Kovalcik, the owner of The Gravity Vault. The gravity vault is based in Hoboken, with franchised indoor climbing facilities throughout New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania, offering a place where both beginner and experienced climbers can learn, train and enjoy climbing alongside one another.

When the pandemic required Lucas to temporarily close the doors, he worked with the EDA to receive a \$10,000 phase two grant that allowed The Gravity Vault to maintain their payroll and meet the rent and other expenses. I had the opportunity to check in with Lucas late last week in a driving rainstorm. He was in the car headed to Brick to open a location for The Gravity Vault there. And today, The Gravity Vault's locations are open, and Lucas and his team are providing their clients with a safe place to climb as the weather turns and the ability to travel to other rock climbing destinations is limited. Check out Lucas and The Gravity Vault at gravityvault.com, very simple. We wish him nothing but the very best for the times to come.  (<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>)

And that goes equally for everybody. Let's keep focused on doing what we need to, to keep our families and community safe, maintaining social distancing, washing our hands frequently with soap and water, or using a hand sanitizer, and importantly, wearing our masks whenever we're indoors and also when we're out in public. Every time you wear your mask you show your fellow New Jerseyans that you care about them and they in turn know that we're all in this together. So let's keep it. It's been a long ago already and we're not done yet.  (<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy>)  (<https://www.youtube.com/h/governorsoffice>)  (<https://www.instagram.com/governorphilmurphy/>)  (<https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>)

Completely off script, one of the great Hollywood stars passed over the weekend, Sean Connery. We binged as a family on two of his best, The Hunt for Red October and The Untouchables over the weekend. What a giant. I was in a restaurant in Chicago on a business trip about 30-something years ago at a breakfast and he walked in -- making The Untouchables, by the way -- he walked in, grab the newspaper, sat down at a table by himself and nobody dared go near him.

With that, in the spirit of the Rutgers University football team if you haven't seen it, it's one of the great lateral plays of all time, I can't believe the referee did not allow it. But with that, I'm going to lateral this over to the Chief Administrator of the Motor Vehicle Commission, please help me welcome Sue Fulton. Sue.

MVC Chair and Chief Administrator Sue Fulton: Thank you, Governor. As you know, as you all know, the Motor Vehicle Commission is the largest customer-facing agency in state government, and the only one that has reopened fully to the public. Following a nearly four-month closure due to COVID, our reopening plan set four priorities to keep people on the road.

Our first priority, move transactions out of the agencies, especially document renewals.

Second, solve the driver testing backlog, especially for commercial drivers.

Third, make agency operations safer, faster and easier.

And finally, clear the backlog of transactions that have to be done in person so that we can effectively move to appointments.

In a massive series of IT projects even more complex than the massive facilities refit that was required to meet COVID guidelines, we dramatically expanded our online capabilities, adding dozens of new transactions and streamlining others with new payment options, longer grace periods, and new ways to verify ID. The results, since reopening, our percentage of transactions processed online compared to 2019 has more than doubled, as the governor indicated, with renewals going from one-third to better than two-thirds online.

Second, we addressed driver testing. We cleared the road test backlog well ahead of schedule, thanks to some creative scheduling, and there's currently no wait for driver testing appointments.

The final piece was agency operations. We had to change the workflow in our agencies for safety and social distancing, but also to increase speed and convenience. For example, a year ago you would have stood in line to check in, then stood in another line to get your ID checked, then stood in one more line for service. Now when you check in, we take your number, and you're free to go until you receive a series of text messages to return for service. This system isn't revolutionary but last year, it didn't even exist in our 39 agencies.

We've had dozens of small changes like no-contact license plate dropboxes at agencies, but in all, the past few months have been a time of tremendous innovation for Motor Vehicle Commission. Here's our total weekly transactions for the last two months. Notice that we averaged roughly 240,000 in 2019. We have beaten that number almost every week.

Now, the remaining transactions have to be done in person and here's where we stand. Out-of-state transfers are appointment only, starting today. CDL renewals -- that's commercial driver license -- have been available by appointment since October 9th. For visa-restricted renewals, appointments are in the works for later this month, and new licenses. Other than violations, those are all the remaining transactions in (https://twitter.com/GovMurphy) licensing centers.

Our vehicle centers are primarily registering private sales of used cars and renewing registrations that expired pre-COVID. Both of these are appointment-only starting today. Some vehicle centers, as you can see, will be entirely appointment only. Others will allow walk-ins for those few unusual transactions that require special, in-person handling. (https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy) (https://www.youtube.com/mrgovernorsoffice)

We remind everyone that you don't need to arrive at a Motor Vehicle Agency before we open at 8:00 a.m. In most cases, you can get an appointment or do your transaction online. As for licensing centers, this slide shows you data from the past three weeks. What you're looking at is the time of arrival, the first arrival at the licensing center of the last customer to get a ticket. Said another way, you needed to arrive at this location by this time in order to get a ticket for service. These are average times for Monday through Friday. You can see most of these times are 8:00 a.m. or later; some of them much later. (https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/) (https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy)

I couldn't be prouder of the amazing volume of work processed by our team since reopening in July. We know that many customers are frustrated as we've been digging out from the COVID-19 backlog. This has been an incredibly stressful time for our customers, as well as for our employees, but I promise you we will never stop trying harder to serve you faster, while protecting you from fraud, identity theft, and COVID-19.

Thank you to everyone on the MVC team. Thank you to our customers who've been so patient with us. And thank you, Governor, for your support.

Governor Phil Murphy: Sue, thank you. A very good presentation, very compelling. I want to thank you and your whole team for all the hard work. I want to remind everybody, nobody -- I know Sue is not, I know I'm not, her team is not spiking any footballs here. We know we have a way still to go but the progress is significant and I appreciate everybody and the patience they've shown and it's clearly collectively working, so thank you, Sue.

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

[Audio Impairment]

Governor Phil Murphy: Do you mind Judy, if we go to Pat and then I'll come back to you? Is that all right? Pat, can we go to you on Halloween, high winds today, Parkway incident yesterday, any of the above? Good to have you.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. With regards to the weekend, as far as EO compliance issues, the greatest number reported to us were from the City of Newark. I think you alluded to it, Governor. Their COVID-19 Task Force broke up a large Halloween party. They seized \$10,000 worth of alcohol and the two party organizers were charged. I spoke to Director

Ambrose, they also had three other parties that were broken up and their fire, ABC and code violations folks also cited 10 additional locations for EO violations. Given what we're seeing in Newark, it was good to see Director Ambrose and those teams out there.

Now with regard to the wind, certainly throughout the whole state we've been experiencing some gusty winds. They're going to probably last through tomorrow, to some degree. Currently, the ROIC is reporting 21,000 power outages, mostly split between JCP&L and PSE&G.

With regard to the parkway yesterday, I want to be clear that that situation on the parkway yesterday was incredibly irresponsible and dangerous. I was glad to see that the troopers on the ground there took quick action and cleaned up that situation as quickly and as safely as possible. I was also on the phone today with the Commissioner of the DOT talking about video, and any possible enforcement actions are being followed up on by our detectives out at Troop D.

I just really close, there's plenty of ways for people to make their voices heard but when they endanger the lives of those out there traveling our highways and byways, there really is no excuse for it. It gave us a great cause for concern. For those that don't know what is lawful and what is not, our phone lines are always open and anyone planning on doing anything of that nature, regardless of the cause, should reach out to law enforcement and understand what's lawful and what is not. That's all I have, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Pat, thank you. I was asked this morning in an interview and I use two adjectives, silly and dangerous. I want to say, for my own tastes, a lot more weight on the dangerous side. Silly because I don't know what that accomplished. If you want to get your guy elected President, either one of these guys, go to Pennsylvania or go to someplace where the face is on the knife's edge. But the dangerous part, that's just not on. Folks are welcome to protest and Pat, I can tell you, you and I have had to get our arms around, over the past eight months, a lot of protests, whether it's at the War Memorial or driving down State Street or at our home, whatever. Folks have generally done a really good, responsible job. The only thing that I got upset about, and I know you did too, is that folks were in close proximity at a lot of those protests without wearing any face coverings. But they didn't suck in other folks who weren't part of it. They didn't put other people in harm's way.

What happened yesterday put other innocent people who were not part of it in harm's way. I know that's what bothered you and that certainly bothers me. Thank you for that. And the wind, you said, may state gusty through tomorrow, is that right?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Yeah, from what we got from National Weather Service may stay gusty through, not as bad as today, certainly subsiding. But, again, always mindful of downed power lines and our constant warning to make the phone call and to not go anywhere near them, because they can be fatal.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah. Amen to that and you and I, in our time together, I can recall at least two fatalities. In both of those cases, it was a snowstorm but the common factor was high wind. I shout out once again to Director Ambrose and his colleagues. You know, Newark of all places, Essex County is down a little bit today, bear with me, 141 cases though still, so it's still substantial. Newark has been a hotspot within Essex County, and the last thing we need are people gathering by the hundreds indoors on top of each other. Thank you for that, as always.

That's the first time we've ever gone out of order. I hope Judy will speak to me again. Not intentionally, but back to Judy, can you give us a soundcheck there? How are you holding up?

[Audio Impairment]

Governor Phil Murphy: Is there a way to pick up a phone and call into the Zoom and do it by phone, Judy? That would be great, if you don't mind.

Maybe we'll start taking a couple of questions that are not health related while Judy gets a phone connection. Is that okay with you, Judy? Apologies for that. So Michelle, again, if they're health related, hold off. Give us some non-health and we'll get back once Judy is back on her feet. Does that sound all right, Michelle?

Q&A Session

Moderator: Sounds good. We'll start with Kevin Rincon.

Governor Phil Murphy: Hi, Kevin.

Kevin Rincon, CBS New York: Hey, Governor, this is COVID testing related, but I think you could answer it. Over the summer, the state was running a number of COVID testing sites and right now, we're seeing some cities and counties doing that and the majority of it is through the private sector, Urgent Care, pharmacies.

We've been seeing long lines and appointments that are starting to take a week, sometimes two weeks down the line for people to come in. I wanted to know if the state is going to do anything to change that on that end, to start opening up some testing sites?

And then if you could just talk about the importance of testing as well, but more of them, I know that there are more of them, and then talk about the importance of testing as we head into these colder months.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, I'll give my best shot. We still have Ed Lifshitz on, so unlike me, Ed has a medical degree, so Ed may have an opinion here that carries more weight. We're getting the Abbott Binax NOW tests that we've begun to get shipments up from the feds. That is going to take us from an already very high, if not the highest state in the nation of testing capacity per capita, up to and even almost, in fact, if they all get used in this 12-week or three-month period -- almost doubling our capacity.

I don't have any comment about any adding any state-run facilities. But in addition to the capacities that we already have, getting the Binax tests, as we are doing, and Pat is overseeing that as well on the OEM side, distributed to the counties and ultimately long-term care, schools, that will be a big X factor for us, a positive X factor.

I'd say one other comment. You said the importance of testing, particularly as we go with colder weather and indoors, everything becomes more important, including testing, Kevin, so it's a good question. But I'd say everything, including testing, tracing, enforcement, the bully pulpit, the plead to do the holidays right. There's no question. You look at the temperatures of the past couple of days, the wind, the rain before that, we are overwhelmingly shifting to an indoors reality in our state. That is going to be here at least till we get back into the spring. Judy, are you on with us? Judy? Ed, anything you'd add to that?

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: I think that you've pretty much covered it. Yes, we're seeing an increase in testing, both of the traditional PCR testing and antigen testing, such as the Abbott Binax NOW that's coming online. We are going to see an explosion in point-of-care testing, including the Binax NOW as well as other kits that will be coming online as well over the coming months, so testing certainly is extremely important and we encourage everybody out there who thinks they may have had exposure to go out and get themselves tested. I do think that the state will have the capacity to handle that testing.

Governor Phil Murphy: Ed, I think you'd want me, or one of us, to reiterate a point. Part of the reason you've got to quarantine if you know you've had a meaningful exposure, you know, the 15 minutes in very close proximity, part of the reason you quarantine first, as the first step, is that it takes a number of days for the virus to incubate and to show up on a test. That's another point that I think we want to remind you of. Q comes before T in this case, but both are important.

Judy, any word out to you? Somebody, if you've got a word to Judy, when she is on, to give me a shout because we want to go back to her. Michelle, let's take another non-medical question.

Moderator: All right, we're going to go to Karen Yi.

Governor Phil Murphy: Hi, Karen. Karen, are you there? Karen, maybe you're muted. Is that possible?

Karen Yi, WNYC: Oh, hi. Can you hear me now?

Governor Phil Murphy: We can.

Karen Yi, WNYC: Okay. How late will county election workers canvass on Tuesday night? What are you expecting in terms of what kind of results there will be on Tuesday?



Is New Jersey still not reporting antigen positive tests in the data? And if so, isn't that an undercount of the positive cases in the state?


Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, are you there by chance? I think I just heard your box.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Can you hear me?

Governor Phil Murphy: I can.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Oh, wonderful. Sorry about that.  (<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>)

Governor Phil Murphy: No worries. You sound great.  (<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy>) You looked great before but you didn't sound so hot. Now we can't see you, but you sound great.  Do you mind, Karen Yi, we're going to come back to you if you don't mind, to your questions. (<https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice>)

Judy, please take it away on your daily and then we'll go back to Karen's questions. Thank you.  (<https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>)

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

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Okay, thank you. Well, good afternoon, everyone. We're entering this week with 1,379 new cases. Our newly reported cases have surpassed 1,000 daily for over two weeks. On Saturday and Sunday, we reported a total of 3,121 cases. Hospitalizations are up and patients in critical care are also up.

We've been here before: those difficult days in March and April. Back then, all of you did the hard work to bring down our case numbers. You took personal responsibility. All of you responded to the call to protect one another from COVID-19.

We need to continue vital prevention efforts. Social distancing, maintaining at least six feet of distance from persons who live outside your household, wearing a mask, washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, using hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol, staying home when sick or if you were exposed to someone with COVID-19.

The CDC recently examined the adherence to mitigation behaviors over time. According to the data presented in the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, thankfully we are seeing mask wearing going up across the country but other safety measures have declined or remained flat. Reported adherence to these preventive behaviors was lowest among younger adults aged 18 to 29.

We need everyone to double down on all these efforts to contain the spread of the virus in our state. New Jerseyans have done it before; you have all done this before and I know you can do it again. With the trends we are seeing, we know this won't be the Thanksgiving we are used to having. But if we all can recommit to fighting this virus together, we can hope that the state is in a better place in time for the holidays. Our behavior will determine the path forward for the state of New Jersey.

Moving on to my daily report, as the Governor shared, our hospitals reported 1,109 hospitalizations, with 212 individuals in critical care and a high of 47% of those patients are on ventilators. Thankfully, there are no new reports of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children.

At the state veteran homes, the numbers remain, the same as they do at our psychiatric hospitals.

On the daily percent positivity as of October 29th, the New Jersey daily report is 5.29%. The Northern part of the state 5.78%, the Central part of the state 4.13%, the Southern part of the state 6.47%.

That concludes my daily report. Please stay safe and remember for each other, for us all, please take the call, download the COVID Alert NJ app and stay safe. Thank you.

Return to Q&A Session

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, it turns out we can both hear you and see you, so this was a win/win/win. Karen Yi was asking, are we potentially under-counting positives because of reporting of the antigen test? I think we've been pretty clear that it's not just a New Jersey matter, but there's a data synching up challenge between the Abbott Binax NOW tests and public health systems around the country. Is that an accurate statement, Judy?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Yes, and accurate that we do not have all of the antigen testing results, both positive and negative, in our system but we're working pretty aggressively to develop that connectivity.

Governor Phil Murphy: That is an ongoing pursuit. Karen, you asked non-healthcare, I can't read my writing here, how late are folks working tomorrow night? And what was your question?

Karen Yi, WNYC: My question was, what are you expecting in terms of the kinds of results there will be on Tuesday night?

Governor Phil Murphy: I think to be determined on what we can expect Tuesday night, but the fact that we have 90% of the 2016 vote total already in the tank and secondly, that counting began a week ago Saturday, I believe we're going to know a fair amount tomorrow night in New Jersey.

And your question about how late are they working? Parimal, do you happen to know how late folks are working? I assume they're working late tomorrow.

Chief Counsel Parimal Garg: Yes, Governor, results will be reported after polls closed at 8:00 p.m. tomorrow. Like you said, under the law that you signed, VBM ballots can begin being counted up to 10 days before the election, so we anticipate a significant number of those will be reported tomorrow.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, so I think it's a combination of working late and knowing a fair amount, at least in New Jersey, tomorrow night. Thanks for that. Michelle, who else do we have?

Moderator: We'll go to Kenneth Burns.

Kenneth Burns, WHYY: Good afternoon, Governor. How are you?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm good, man. I see your picture right in front of me.

Kenneth Burns, WHYY: Awesome. I just have one question concerning the MVC, and it's more directed towards the Chief. I was wondering how many of the changes that you implemented to reopen will stay permanent after the pandemic?

Governor Phil Murphy: Good question. I was actually going to tee Sue up for some of this as well. I get asked this about elections, Sue, all the time. Is this if this is going so well, is this a permanent condition or are you going to reassess it? This is a very good question from Kenneth on the steps you've taken at MVC.

MVC Chair and Chief Administrator Sue Fulton: Right, and I appreciate that. Some of these steps we're going to keep because they just make things move faster and it's easier for customers. We're certainly going to try to keep transactions online, keep that availability.

The appointments it will depend, over time, what's more convenient for people. Sometimes people don't want to have to make an appointment, they want to just come in right now. And for the foreseeable future, we're going to continue to move in the direction of appointments but that we'll have to revisit.

We said early on that designating licensed centers and vehicle centers was essential for social distancing. We're learning more about that. In a lot of places, it actually moves transactions a lot faster but we'll take a look at it, because there's certainly some locations, especially further south where they don't have the kind of high volume, where they're far apart, that we would revisit. It kind of depends on which innovation it is.

Governor Phil Murphy: Good answer. Thank you for the question, Kenneth, Sue, thanks for the answer. Michelle.

Moderator: We will go over to Colleen O'Dea

Governor Phil Murphy: Hi, Colleen, are you there?

Colleen O'Dea, NJ Spotlight: Thank you for taking my call. I just wanted to ask, based on what happened yesterday, you had the parkway incident but also I know there was a big rally up in Wayne, which was very near to a dropbox. Some people had been concerned, I guess, that it would be blocked? We're not sure that actually happened.

But given what we've been seeing, I'm just wondering what you're expecting tomorrow? Are you expecting any kind of rallies or any disruptions at the polls? And if so, what kind of contingencies do we have for that?

Governor Phil Murphy: I did not hear that, in fact, the dropbox in Wayne was blocked, unless Pat heard otherwise. I did not hear that.

Listen, I want to broaden the frame of the question, Colleen. It wasn't because of potential intimidation, it was because of public health but I am sure happy, I'm confident that as we open up for business tomorrow, we may not be quite at 3.9 million that was the total vote count from 2016 but we've taken a lot of pressure out of the system by the hybrid model that we have pursued. While we expect, obviously, that there will be many people who vote tomorrow, far more people have already exercised that right.

We've got an all-hands meeting later on this afternoon just to review our posture for tomorrow. I believe we're going to have a safe and successful day but we take nothing for granted. I would just say to folks, any amount of intimidation is categorically, flat out, 100%, black and white, illegal and that will be enforced, strenuously. Let's just hope, Colleen, whether it's in New Jersey or anywhere around the country, that this is talk and not action. I am very confident in the 21 county clerks and the posture that we have in terms of voting access in all of our counties.

And again, it's one thing to peacefully demonstrate for your guy or for your cause, as long as you're doing it responsibly. We've got no problem with that. But don't make it -- don't tangle that into other people's business who are innocent and unrelated, and that's the frustration I think we had, that Pat and I have shared with yesterday's incident, and that's the same mindset that we'll have around tomorrow. Thank you for that. Michelle.

Moderator: Okay, we'll go over to Matt Arco.

Governor Phil Murphy: Hello, Matt.

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: Good afternoon, Governor. Governor, New York announced that they're no longer using the joint travel advisory that was rolled out with New Jersey and Connecticut in June and will instead test people traveling to New York. I'm curious if New Jersey, are we still going to be using this travel advisory, I guess, with Connecticut? And if you have any plans to scrap it, and maybe go to a testing model, like they've done in New York?

And also Colonel, just to clarify, have any citations been issued regarding the incident on the Garden State Parkway? You also mentioned that detectives will be looking at videos. Is there an expectation there that citations that haven't been issued will be issued?

Governor Phil Murphy: Matt, I will defer to Pat on the second one but Judy and I may want to address the first one. We're going to stay with the current posture that we've got. Remember, by the way, I don't know that this was made obvious by New York, but I know it for sure because I spoke to Governors Cuomo and Lamont a number of days ago, none of what any of our three states are doing impairs the ability of folks to do essential stuff like get to work. Travel among our three states, if it's essential, you're going to work, you're going for a healthcare reason, whatever it might be, that is not included in any of the advisories that any of our states have put out.

Beyond that, our posture is the same. We're just asking people if you don't have to travel, just flat out don't travel, period. Judy, I know is on regularly with her counterparts in both New York and Connecticut and this is something that I know she is constantly kicking the tires to tighten up whatever measures we have in place. Judy, anything you want to add to that?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Just what you said, there's so much widespread disease, don't travel if you don't need to. That's the safest situation, not only for yourself but for people you come in contact with. But we do kick the tires, we're looking at the travel advisory every week and we'll make changes as we need to but right now, don't travel.

Governor Phil Murphy: Don't travel. Judy, as you were getting on I said Q comes before T in the sense that if you have traveled or if you've had a known exposure, you've got a quarantine. Then give it a number of days until the virus is incubated; Ed didn't correct me, so I assume I got this largely right, and then get tested. That's the order. Pat, any comments to Matt's question about the incident yesterday on the parkway?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thanks, Governor. I would just start with, the troopers' primary objective yesterday when that occurred was to get that traffic moving again. Again, I never want to second-guess troopers and not being out there, but to start issuing citations and summonses out there probably would have hindered the troopers' ability to get the parkway flowing north. But that being said, the review of videos, and if we are able to get enough evidence and indication of maybe, it's those first three cars in the left center and right lane but I'll defer to the detectives and the Turnpike Authority to see if they can identify those folks. And if so, I would imagine that they would be issued motor vehicle summonses for obstructing traffic but I will let that investigation play out, Matt. Thanks, Gov.

Governor Phil Murphy: It does give me the opportunity, and I can say this because I'm not patting myself on the back but we have the best State Troopers of any state in the United States of America. That must be said. Michelle, back to you.

Moderator: We'll take your next question from Daniel Munoz.

Governor Phil Murphy: Hey, Daniel.

Daniel Munoz, NJBIZ: Thanks for having this. Where else were authorities breaking up these indoor Halloween parties? I know we just mentioned a number of Newark instances but I'm wondering where up and down the state this was happening as well?

What percentage of positive cases are made up by the 18- to 29-year-old age group? What's the most recent data showing on that and what percentage of positive cases are coming out of indoor gatherings versus indoor dining?

Also, regarding second-wave projections, I'm curious about when state health officials expect this second wave to peak? So in terms of hospitalization daily count, daily new cases, RT, anything else and what those high and low estimates are? Thanks.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thanks, Daniel. The ones that I was referring to in my remarks were Newark. I'm not suggesting that that doesn't mean there weren't others but unless Pat corrects me, the ones I was referring to and Pat spoke to specifically were in Newark.

Judy, I've just got to say one more thing on indoor dining which I mentioned last week, and then turn it to you, Judy, if you've got any color on the 18 to 29, what percentage are coming from indoor gatherings? I think it's going to be very hard to answer that question, Daniel, on what percentage from the indoors and I'll leave it to Judy and Ed to address what their models are showing in terms of peaks.

I would say this. So we always say that when we were opening things up on a regular basis, you heard me and all of us say that we knew when we took a step we would take on more risk, and we felt the risk was manageable and it was responsible risk. Last week, I referred to the risk as it relates to indoor dining or indoor activities in a slightly different way but it captures, I think in a more tangible way, what that risk looks like. That is these are national surveys, not specific to New Jersey but when you ask people about

their habits, and then you compare those answers not just to each other, but also to absolute questions of have you been exposed, yes or no? Or have you in fact tested positive, yes or no? On the list of habits that correlates with a higher likelihood of exposure, or actually testing positive, are indoor activities, and that makes sense.

So we knew, for instance, when we went to 25% of capacity on indoor dining, or 25%, of capacity on indoor entertainment or gyms, we knew we'd be taking on some amount of responsible risk. That's the way I would think about it. It's the gatherings that are not capacity limited, that are beyond our control, or at least beyond our realistic control, that are the ones that we worry about: on top of each other at a Halloween party, on top of each other at an after-football watch party, or at a Thanksgiving event of some sort. That is where our concern is. That is, I believe Judy you would see this the same way, that is where we think the indoor exposure is coming from. But any color you have on the 18-to-29 age group and/or when you think what your models tell you about second wave peaking.

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I'll talk about the second wave. Taking very, very preliminary predictive modeling puts it in the first quarter of next year. But it's very, very preliminary. It changes every day as we look at new cases and hospitalizations. We so far have tracked a slight uptick with reopenings but it's so slight it has not moved the dial very much in terms of hospitalizations. We've had a lot of capacity every week, we try to do some predictions but it's really very preliminary. I wouldn't go to the bank with it. We're going to be vigilant from now through March.

Ed, do you have the 19- to 24-year-old percentages?

DOH Communicable Disease Service Medical Director Dr. Ed Lifshitz: I can give some general background on that. What we began to see over the summer was unusual. Over the summer, we began to see an increase in cases first amongst the high school and college-aged people, whereas traditionally it had always been the older people, the working age, the 35 to 55 the most cases were in. The younger group increased over the summer as to their positivity.

More recently, what we've begun to see is this: the good news is that age group has leveled off, meaning we're not seeing the same types of increases that we were in that age group that we were before, and their positivity has actually begun to decrease somewhat.

The bad news is now the more traditional age groups, both those older working adults -- again, the roughly 35-to-55 year olds -- they're the ones that are mainly driving the big increases that we're seeing now. They're catching up and passing what those younger age groups have been. So now we're beginning to see more of what had been traditionally seen. Which again, I guess the good news is that high school and colleges have largely flattened out, whereas the working adults have increased.

Governor Phil Murphy: Ed, I'll add one more bit of good news associated with that and then go back to that Executive Order I signed last week. The other piece of good news, whether you're a young adult or a working adult, in both cases, you're not a senior. We know seniors were crushed, whether it was because of age, frailty, comorbidities, whatever it might be.

I spoke to a woman today and I said, "Well, if I'm doing the math, your dad was 72." And she said "He was, and by the way, he had some comorbidities." But she said it offends her that just because he had comorbidities, the assumption was that we're going to lose the guy. She said "He probably had another 10 or 20 years in him."

The good news is, whether it's young people, whether it's folks in their prime of their working lives, in neither case they're seniors and that, God willing, will lead to a lower -- again, I'm practicing without a license -- a lower mortality rate.

The reminder on the Executive Order is that effective Thursday morning, 6:00 a.m., that's another weapon that we have not had. So if you're an employer, you've got obligations now effective Thursday morning at 6:00 a.m. and that relates to providing masks, proper social distancing, breaks so that folks can wash their hands with soap and water, hyper hygiene standards on surfaces. That will be another weapon at our disposal and it's one that I want to make sure we underscore that. Thank you all.

Michelle, we'll do a couple more, if that's okay.

Moderator: Okay, next, we'll take Steve Burns.

Governor Phil Murphy: Hey, Steve.

Steve Burns, WCBS 880: How are you, Governor? Thanks for doing this. Really appreciate it.

Governor Phil Murphy: My pleasure.

Steve Burns, WCBS 880: Looking at a press release that came out from the Justice Department a few hours ago, I'm not sure if you've seen it, they are sending out enforcement from what they say is the Civil Rights Division to 44 jurisdictions in 18 states, and among those are Middlesex and Bergen Counties.

They're kind of characterizing this as a routine thing that happens every election but I wanted to see if you had seen that press release, if you have any concerns about this DOJ coming in and monitoring voting practices in your two counties here?

Governor Phil Murphy: First of all, Steve, good question. I've not seen it. I'll turn things over to Parimal and Pat in a second. It's not normal, as far as I could – unless somebody tells me this normally happens. It's not normal as far as I'm concerned. I have no idea how they would have picked those two counties out of 44 jurisdictions in the country. That mystifies me.

Listen, I haven't seen it yet. If there's if there's a strong rationale for it, I will stand to be corrected and I will go on the record and correct myself and reverse course.

But this reminds me a little bit of the DOJ steps as it relates to our veteran homes. You know, that was a week before elections. This is a day before an election. I can't help but think that this is some politics too. I hope I'm wrong and God bless our veterans. We followed every step of the way the CDC guidelines, and if we're going to try to keep anybody safe, it's going to be our veterans. I'm not aware of this step. Steve.

I'll ask Parimal or Pat if they are, if they've got any color

Chief Counsel Parimal Garg: Governor, we haven't seen that press release, either but we'll obviously take a close look at it and determine an appropriate response.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, and by the way, even as we said, as it relates to the veterans homes, we take all that seriously. So if they're looking for information from us, we provide it. Pat, have you heard anything on this or no?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: That's the first I've heard of it, Governor.

Governor Phil Murphy: Steve, if we get more color, we'll come back to you. Thank you for that. Michelle, let's try to squeeze in one or two more if we can.

Moderator: David Wildstein.

David Wildstein, New Jersey Globe: Hi, Governor, how are you?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm good. How are you doing?

David Wildstein, New Jersey Globe: I'm well, thank you. I just have one question. Will the total number of provisional paper ballots that are cast on Election Day be disclosed before election officials go home tomorrow night? So that there's no question as to the transparency of the actual number of ballots that will be locked up until they count them on November 11th?

Governor Phil Murphy: It's a good question. I don't know that I've got the answer. Parimal, do you know the answer to that?

Chief Counsel Parimal Garg: No, Governor, I'm not sure I have the answer, either but we'll certainly follow up with the Secretary of State and the County Boards of Elections and circle back.

Governor Phil Murphy: Mahen, make sure we circle back to David on that. It's a good question and it'll also tell us, by the way pretty quickly, if we did have that number, you'd have a pretty good handle on the total turnout of the election, which again, I believe will be a record but the facts will either support that or not. David, we'll come back to that. Thank you for that. Michelle.

Moderator: We'll go to Charlie Kratovil.

Governor Phil Murphy: Hi Charlie. Charlie? Charlie, are you muted? One more time. Charlie, are you there? Am I muted? Is that? Is that the problem? You're hearing me, Pat's shaking his head. Charlie, we're going to have to skip you. It was good seeing you in New Brunswick on Friday. Michelle, who else?

Moderator: Okay, we'll go to Shlomo Schorr.

Governor Phil Murphy: Hi, Shlomo.

Shlomo Schorr, The Lakewood Shopper: Hi, Gov, thank you for waiting around. Just going back to what you're talking about regarding the in-house gatherings. Is there any method that would cause you to scale back the restrictions that are you've allowed until now and not just indoor gatherings, and rather some new restrictions would be needed?

Governor Phil Murphy: You mean as a general matter for the state?

Shlomo Schorr, The Lakewood Shopper: Yeah, in terms of maybe you're looking at hospitalizations, etc.?

Governor Phil Murphy: I mean, I don't have a number. Hospitalizations are as I mentioned in my remarks. I think I said this earlier, six days in a row, Judy, over 1,000 I show. Judy will also want me just say that at the worst, in the spring, our peak was 8,300, I believe, in the hospital. So in as much as we're not happy to be over 1,000, it's a far cry from where we were.

I'd say there's no magic threshold, Shlomo. This is an iterative approach, it's data based. I use the word kicking the tires as it relates to New York and Connecticut. I would say we're constantly health experts. The entire administration is constantly, you know, living with this and trying to make the best decisions we can.

It does, Shlomo, permit me to say something on the back of something Judy said about 10 minutes ago, when she said preliminarily – and she put a lot of caveats on it as I know she wanted to, to ensure that on the what the modeling says it will look like and when it would peak in first quarter and whatnot. We haven't done this in a long time, and maybe we should again, Mahen.

When we first were in this fight, you'll remember every day we were putting up, Judy, what the model says if we do nothing versus what the model says if we took the steps we're taking. And as a state, millions of you out there – working with us, obviously – we crushed the curve and proved the models wrong.

Judy would want me to say this: the models are not a fait accompli. They exist, in many cases, based on if you do what you're doing now, this is where the trajectory will take you. Which is why, at the end of the day, it's so important that we all sort of buck up again and push back against this fatigue. It's what we can do collectively as a state that can literally bend the curve. That's not theoretical. In the spring we were using Ebola, we were using HIV/AIDS, H1N1, other past epidemiological experiences to inform our theoretical ability to bend the curve.

We don't need to do that anymore. We know what we did. We did it together. And so Judy, I think that's right. That's the challenge before us, right? The challenge is to do exactly that, again, to bend this curve. And I say again, this is not forever and always right? We've spoken as recently as at the end of the week about vaccine plans. We had a White House call on Friday that was all about vaccine distribution. I thought it was a good, instructive conversation. Tony Fauci was a part of that, Deborah Birx and others, Alex Azar, the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

It's not like we're going to have to do this forever and for always. We're going to get there, folks but it's up to us to bend that curve again, just like we did the first time. I think that's a good place to stop.

I want to thank Judy and Ed on the health side, Pat on the law enforcement, Parimal, Mahen, thank you for directing the show. Sue Fulton, thanks for being with us today. Keep up the great work. Neither Sue nor I, I don't want anyone to accuse us of thinking that we're in the end zone; we're not, but we're moving the ball, one foot in front of the other down the field. Again, I thank her and her colleagues.

Again, two quickies. I've already given you my impassioned Go-Fight-Win. We've bent the curve before, we need to do it again. We can do it again. With your help folks, we will do it again.

Secondly, unrelatedly, unless you hear otherwise, we're going to try to get back together at the War Memorial Thursday at one o'clock, unless you hear otherwise.

And needless to say, tomorrow's a big day. You can exercise your right to vote right now. Again, I would not put it in the mail; I would at this point, either drop it in a secure box or hand it to a poll worker tomorrow, or vote in person tomorrow. I don't care who you vote for, literally, but I do care, we care, that you vote.

If you are going to exercise your right not just to vote, but to scream at the top of your lungs about who you're for and which guy you want to get elected, that's okay, but don't do it in a way that will get you in trouble. We will do that. Because if you do, we will make note of it and we will take enforcement action.

We're going to have a great election folks. It already has been a great one. Tomorrow will be no exception. I want to thank again all the poll workers, our county clerks, members of the National Guard who will be there to plus-up processing and counting. It has been, so far, an extraordinary election season. Let's finish it out in a great, responsible, broadly participatory way tomorrow.

Governor Phil Murphy



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