



## Governor Phil Murphy





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# AG Grewal and Colonel Callahan Issue Update on Charges Filed Against Violators of Governor Murphy's COVID-19 Executive Orders

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04/4/2020

**TRENTON** – Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal and Colonel Patrick J. Callahan, Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police, announced the following recent enforcement actions against violators of Governor Murphy’s Emergency Orders related to COVID-19.

“The Governor’s executive orders are commonsense measures to keep people safe during this historic health crisis,” said Attorney General Grewal. “When people like the partiers in Rumson flout the orders and show disrespect and hostility to police officers, they not only put themselves and the others immediately involved in peril, they risk inciting others to engage in such irresponsible and dangerous behavior. Our police officers are working courageously every day to protect us all, and we will continue to charge anyone who violates the emergency orders, which literally are a matter of life and death.”

“Law enforcement and medical professionals are on the frontlines of this battle to protect the citizens of New Jersey from the COVID-19 virus, and we cannot stress enough how important it is that each person follow the guidelines set forth in the Executive Order,” said **Colonel Patrick Callahan, Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police**. “I have said that law enforcement will act swiftly against those who blatantly place the lives of others at risk. Well, you don’t get much more blatant than the party crowd in Rumson that resisted and insulted police officers who asked them to disperse.”

- **Newark Enforcement.** The Newark Police Department’s COVID-19 task force issued 180 summonses for violation of the emergency orders and ordered 11 non-essential businesses closed in enforcement actions on Friday and Saturday, April 3 and 4.
- **Rumson Party—John Maldjian, age 54 of Rumson,** was charged today by the Rumson Police with reckless endangerment, disorderly conduct, and two separate charges related to violating the emergency orders. All are disorderly persons offenses. He was also charged with violating two borough ordinances. The charges stem from an incident in Rumson on Saturday evening, April 3. At approximately 8:19 p.m., the police were dispatched to a report of a large party with a band. When they arrived, they discovered the homeowner, John Maldjian, together with another man, playing acoustic guitars on the front porch of the home. There were approximately 30 people, between the

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ages of 40 and 50, gathered on Maldjian's front lawn and the adjoining street watching the performance. Some had lawn chairs and alcoholic beverages. Despite the fact that police were on scene with flashing lights attempting to disperse the crowd, the band continued playing. It was not until a Rumson officer directly approached Maldjian that he stopped singing and playing. Maldjian then told his Facebook Live audience (he was streaming his performance) that he had to stop playing. The crowd became unruly when told to disperse and some shouted curses at the police and "Welcome to Nazi Germany." Charges related to those disorderly "audience" members are forthcoming.

- **Sughuy Cepeda, 43, of Teaneck**, was charged with second-degree terroristic threats during an emergency, two counts of third-degree aggravated assault on an officer, obstruction, resisting arrest, and violation of a temporary restraining order (TRO). On Saturday, April 4, Cepeda was arrested by the Englewood Police Department for violation of a TRO. While in custody, Cepeda spit and coughed at officers on several occasions and stated she was COVID positive. Cepeda was transported to Bergen New Bridge Medical Center in Paramus. There, she allegedly coughed at two police officers and spit a mouthful of water at them.
- **Wegmans Coughing Incident.** The West Windsor Police Department signed juvenile petitions for harassment and obstruction of justice against a 16-year-old female for allegedly purposefully coughing on another customer at the Wegmans food store in West Windsor on Tuesday, March 31. The victim, a 52-year-old woman, had asked the juvenile to step back because she was too close. The juvenile and her mother got into an argument with the victim, during which the juvenile allegedly pulled down a facial mask she was wearing, walked closer to the victim, and coughed toward the victim while claiming that she had the coronavirus.
- **Rita A Lacis, 61, of Parsippany**, was charged with violating the emergency order on Saturday, April 4, by the Rockaway Borough Police Department. Police had given Lacis a warning after they learned that she was continuing to operate her dog grooming service. At that time, she claimed that she misunderstood the order requiring closure of all non-essential businesses. She was charged when officer saw two customers drop off a dog a short time later.
- **Saul Rosen, 52, of Toms River**, was charged on Saturday, April 4, with violating the emergency orders for hold a gathering in his back yard with more than 20 people.
- **Luke Shuscavage, 27, of Princeton, N.J.**, was charged on Friday, April 3, with violating the emergency orders for bringing five youths from a youth shelter to Lenape Park in Raritan Township to play basketball.

Violations of the emergency orders constitute a disorderly persons offense carrying a potential sentence of up to six months in jail and a fine of up to \$1,000. However, violators can potentially face criminal charges including second, third, and fourth degree indictable offenses.

Last week, Attorney General Grewal announced enhanced charges against six individuals who were charged with assaulting law enforcement officers and violating the emergency orders. Specifically, those enhanced charges included making terroristic threats during a state of emergency, which is a second degree offense and carries a sentence of five to 10 years in state prison and a fine of up to \$150,000. Defendant Cepeda is similarly charged for her conduct against law enforcement officers.

Third-degree charges carry a sentence of three to five years in prison and a fine of up to \$15,000.

If you are seeing a lack of compliance with the Governor's emergency orders in your town, please contact your local police department or report here <https://covid19.nj.gov/violation> (<https://covid19.nj.gov/violation>)

The Attorney General's Office and New Jersey State Police will continue to work with law enforcement throughout New Jersey to deter non-complaint behavior.

The charges are merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

No one should take advantage of this pandemic to further their own biased agendas. COVID-19 is no excuse to promote anti-Semitic conspiracy theories and or other biased stereotypes. Please report bias crimes at 1-800-277-BIAS.

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