

Governor Phil Murphy

TRANSCRIPT: March 25th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Giving New Jerseyans an update on COVID-19. WATCH:



Governor Phil Murphy: ...no hugs and high-fives. Just to say the reason is I'm still dealing with a compromised immune system myself, so I want to make sure I'm practicing the social distancing we are preaching. So, just to make sure you know that we're all still very close friends up here.

I'm joined as usual by the woman who needs no introduction, to my right the Health Commissioner Judy Persichilli; to her right State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan; to my immediate left State Police Superintendent Col. Pat Callahan; to his left, Department of Health Assistant Commissioner Chris Neuwirth. We've got the Director of the Department of Homeland Security Jared Maples with us. Mr. Director, nice to have you here.

Also, I'm honored in the front row we have a couple of VIPs with us and important players – Lieutenant Colonel David Park, Commander of the Philadelphia District for the United States Army Corps of Engineers. Honored to have you, Colonel, and Pete Tranchik, Chief of Engineering and Construction for the Philadelphia District. Great to have you, Pete, as well. Can't say enough good things about the relationship that we have developed with the Army Corps of Engineers, and Pat Callahan will give you a little bit more of a history. We didn't just develop this last week. This is a new generation of our relationship and it means a lot to have you here. I had a very good exchange yesterday with Major General Jeff Millhorn, who has been extremely supportive in his own right.

And just a quick riff for a second – these gentlemen and many colleagues, including Director Maples and certainly Col. Callahan and some other folks I'll mention in a minute, are spending all of their time at the Regional Operations and Intelligence Center, the ROIC, which opened in 2006. And it's a great bipartisan lesson, like so much we're living through. It was



opened under Governor Corzine but it was an idea that came to fruition to New Jersey at least from the 9/11 Commission Report, which was as well all know, cochaired by Governor Tom Kean.

The ROIC is the home for the Office of Emergency Management and State Emergency Operations Center. It's not unique in America but it borders on unique. It is an extraordinary location. Chris is spending most of his life there these days as well, and this is really important and these guys can attest to this. You've got around social distancing, obviously, you've got around the aforementioned folks plus my Chief of Staff George Helmy is now working out of there. You've got the FEMA brothers and sisters who are at that table, I mentioned the Department of Health; any other part of government. Noreen Giblin who sits beside me and is in charge of coordinating all the cabinet affairs is part of that team.

So, to each and every one of you, I want to thank Pat in particular because it's under your aegis, it's a big deal and it allows us to do things as a state... And by the way, in peacetime it will have the FBI, the US Department of Homeland Security in addition to state, county and municipal agencies all under that roof. So, to Jared and Pat who live with that every day we thank you for hosting us.

First and probably most importantly, since our briefing yesterday we have learned of an additional 736 positive test results. That brings the statewide total to 4402. We have also learned of 18 more COVID-19 related deaths in our state, and that number does not get any easier to report I promise you. To date, that means that 62 of our fellow residents in the great state of New Jersey have lost their lives as a result of COVID-19 related complications since this emergency was declared. God bless their souls. May they rest in peace. To them, their memories and their families, our hearts, thoughts and prayers go out to them.

As I have said, frankly as we have said on many occasions, these numbers are sobering but they are not surprising to us. We knew early on the trajectory that these reports would take, especially as we ramped up our testing regime – and they are doing just that. So, you've got the loss of life which is stark – again, sadly not unexpected given what we saw months ago in terms of where this virus was headed. But on the testing side, again, we repeat, this is partly certainly due to community spread but it is also overwhelmingly due to the fact that we've been one of the most aggressive testing states in America.

By example, we have now the second-highest positive tests of any American state yet we have one-fourth the population of California. In fact, I think one-fourth on a good day, and we're the 11th largest state in the nation to give you an idea of how large California is. That's a big statement, not just about the virus but also about the aggressiveness with which we have attacked the testing regime.

Speaking of testing, we've mentioned these as they've come up and I'll mention it today. Essex County has announced that it will open a drive-through testing facility for county residents only tomorrow. For more information, or to make an appointment – and you have to make an appointment – please visit www.essexcovid.org (<http://www.essexcovid.org>), www.essexcovid.org (<http://www.essexcovid.org>). And again, as the number of positive cases continues to rise, we need to take steps now to ensure our continued preparedness.

To be clear, at this moment our hospital networks, while they are under tremendous stress – and we cannot say enough about the heroism of our frontline healthcare workers – they are currently meeting the needs of the patients who require hospitalization. But we must be ready for the time when the surge comes and this is no longer the case. We have been working aggressively to rapidly expand hospital capacity. Make no mistake – we are in this fight to save lives.

And I would just say this, that we completely and utterly reject some pockets – I might add happily small pockets – that are suggesting around the country, and mercifully I've not heard much of this in New Jersey, that certain persons are expendable. The fact of the matter is, everyone is indispensable. We will fight to save every single life. We will leave nothing on the battlefield in that effort. There is no cost that is too high to save any one precious life.

Let's all remember that we are America. We're the country that never leaves the fallen soldier injured or killed on the battlefield. We always go back, including putting lives at risk to get that fallen soldier. That is America. That is what we stand for. That is our value system and that is New Jersey. We will fight to save every single life and there is no cost too high associated with that.

Given the current trajectory of new cases, we have known that we will need to increase hospital capacity. So, I've said that at the moment, as under stress as our system is and the heroism is being played out every minute, we are able to withstand this at the moment. But at a certain point we will need, we've known all along, Judy, that we need to increase our hospital capacity. This is a given. Our state, and correct me if I'm wrong, currently has 18,433 acute care beds including 2000 beds for those requiring critical care.

Again, that's 18,433 acute care beds including 2000 beds for those requiring critical care. Over the next several weeks, our goal is to increase our capacity by 2360. And both Judy and Pat will get into some of those details.

We have been working, thanks to Col. Park and his team and to the rest of the colleagues here, with the Army Corps to ready wings in hospitals across the state, working directly with our hospital systems to build out capacity within their current facilities. Additionally the Department, as the Commissioner's previously stated, is working on bringing closed hospitals in their entirety back into service. In taking these steps we can bring 1360 new beds online.

And again, thanks to Col. Park, Pete and the Corps of Engineers working alongside our team, we have identified three locations where temporary field hospitals can be stood up, one in each of the regions of our state – north, central and south. And that totals up to an additional 1000 beds that can be activated in just a matter of days and weeks. And again, I must give in absentia a huge shoutout to one of Pat's colleagues, New Jersey State Police Captain Sean Kilcomons, who has taken a lead role in all of this as well. Captain Kilcomons wanted to be with us but he isn't with us because he's at the ROIC doing exactly what we're talking about. So, please give Sean a particular shoutout for us.

The first site which we will begin working on immediately in hopes of having it fully functional and ready to call into service will be at The Meadowlands Convention Center in Secaucus. To follow will come the New Jersey Convention Center in Edison and then the Atlantic City Convention Center. And in terms of the beds and the totals in all of this, Pat and Judy want me to remind you that there is some fungibility with this that will be dictated as the facts on the ground warrant us to do so.

But these steps will allow us to expand hospital capacity rapidly in the short-term, and ensure both a proper continuum of care for those residents who will need it; and greater flexibility for our healthcare system to respond to this emergency. I'm extremely grateful, again, I want to repeat this to President Trump and to FEMA, for making the field medical stations available to us and for making Col. Park and Pete and their colleagues available to us as well. And I cannot express enough my gratitude to the Army Corps for their quick work and ability to hit the ground at full speed alongside of us, to Captain Kilcomons and the troopers for their efforts; and I also want to give our brothers and sisters at FEMA, especially FEMA Region 2, a huge shoutout for their help.

Also, I've mentioned throughout the course of the past several weeks it takes a village, and the private sector has really stood up in a big way. I want to give a shoutout today, among others, to Shoprite and Wakefern Food Corp for their help in securing trailers for the mobile field hospital equipment.

We are preparing based on what we see in real time. We must be ready to ensure hospital capacity. And it is my fervent hope that these preparedness measures remain just that, measures of preparedness. No one would be happier than the group of us and our colleagues here and back working at the ROIC and elsewhere if we overprepare. That'll be the best mistake we ever, ever made. And we hope this all remains measures of preparedness. But as we have done every step of the way since January, we will ensure that we are prepared.

We will not be left scrambling. We will be ready to act decisively to protect the health of our residents and we will continue to push for the personal protective equipment our frontline health responders desperately need.

Quickly in some other news, I have signed today an executive order directing all childcare centers statewide that wish to continue operating to certify by this Friday, March 27th that they will solely serve the children of essential workers. And we kind of previewed this yesterday and the day before that this was coming. Those that do not certify that they can and will exclusively care for these children must close by Wednesday, April 1st, which is next Wednesday. Those which remain open will need to abide by new health and safety guidelines which will be released in concert, under advisement from Judy and her team. They'll be released by the Department of Children and Families.

Should this process result in any gaps in childcare availability, the Director of the Office of Emergency Management will direct county OEM offices to identify schools that can serve as emergency childcare centers for the children of essential workers up through grade 8. We are taking this step for a simple reason – we need all of our frontline workers on the job helping us to get through this emergency. A lack of childcare cannot be a barrier for them or their response. While these workers commit themselves to our New Jersey family, we will commit to protecting their families.

We had some really good help and input from our legislative partners, and again, I can't say enough good things about them. In particular, I want to give a shoutout to Senator Joe Vitale and Assemblywoman Yvonne Lopez who tragically just lost her brother suddenly a couple of days ago, unrelated to this crisis I might add.

Separately, we are also looking closely at the federal legislation that is currently before the Senate so we can figure out precisely the aide amounts that will be coming to New Jersey. I am pleased that from what we know about the bill so far, many New Jerseyans will receive direct relief from the economic impacts of COVID-19.

Last week I led a letter with our regional partner Governors asking for direct financial aide to our states. I spent a tremendous amount of time and energy burning up the phone lines to the White House, to the President, the Vice President directly as well as to their teams, Congressional leadership – to Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader Schumer fighting tooth and nail for it. I particularly want to thank, again, our Congressional Delegation to New Jersey who fought so tirelessly, especially Senators Bob Menendez and Corey Booker for their efforts as well.

The direct assistance for states is a strong first step, but let me be clear, we will almost certainly need more help and I will continue to push for more help. We need this lifeline to stay strong through this emergency and help ensure that once it is over, we'll be able to more rapidly and readily get our state back open entirely and fully running again.

So, before I move on, let me tell you a couple of highlights as we see it in this bill that sits before the Senate: up to \$1200 in cash payments to everyday New Jerseyans and \$500 per child – that is direct to individuals; extension of unemployment benefits to 13 weeks and it will allow self-employed, part-time and gig economy workers to be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits as well; a \$150 billion Coronavirus Relief Fund to states, localities and tribal governments who are on the

frontlines of this pandemic, and that was the piece of this that matches up against our leadership in asking for the direct cash assistance; \$100 billion for hospitals and healthcare workers who are leading the way in testing and treatment; \$15.5 billion extra for SNAP or food stamp benefits to make sure vulnerable populations remain fed during these trying times; \$45 billion to FEMA disaster relief funds to help support the ongoing actions in states; \$3.5 billion for childcare development block grants, ensuring first responders, healthcare and other essential workers can access childcare while they're on the frontlines responding to the pandemic; \$25 billion to public transit operators to ensure public transportation operations for those who need to get to their jobs.

NJ Transit on that last one is very much in that bucket. I think their ask was at least for \$1.25 billion, so that is still winding its way through the Senate. It was negotiated effectively as of 1:37 AM this morning. It feels like it's got bipartisan support and God willing it'll get through both chambers and signed by the President because God knows we need it.

Other news, I had a good conversation with Vice President Pence this morning regarding a couple of items, especially our extant requests from a couple of days now for a disaster declaration. I'm hopeful for a positive outcome. I don't want to put words in the Vice President's mouth but he was also quite positive. Our staffs are going to connect, if not before by the end of the business day today. I reiterated our continuing – I'm going to use a hard word here – desperate need for more personal protective equipment for our healthcare workers, first responders, other essential workers. He understands that. We've gotten two installments; we need a lot more. He asked that we reup, reclarify rather our ask which we are doing as we speak. I think in fact, Chris, you are personally doing that this afternoon so thank you for that.

I also reminded the Vice President and he again graciously accepted that reminder that we have a request before the White House in terms of the 502F designation for our National Guard under Section 32 of the Stafford Act. Again, it was a good conversation. We need all of the above – the disaster declaration and the PPE in particular are incredibly important.

We also learned that the federal Department of Health and Human Services has awarded \$1.9 million to help 24 health centers in New Jersey address screening and testing needs, acquire medical supplies and boost telehealth capacity. We are greatly appreciative for this funding. I mentioned that it takes a village. There are all sorts of folks outside of government doing great work. I mentioned the folks who were supplying the trailers for the medical equipment at these new field hospitals.

I want to remind folks that the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund launched yesterday to great effect. It's a nongovernment entity so I want to make sure everyone knows that. It's a 501(c3) organization. It's got a great Board of Directors, it's got great New Jersey talent. No state in the nation could put forward the talent they were able to scramble together on a moment's notice. If you want to donate and support them, and this is the last I'll mention this for a little while, but everybody listening www.njprf.org (<http://www.njprf.org>), that's www.njprf.org (<http://www.njprf.org>). That PRF stands for Pandemic Relief Fund.

I just had a brief and very productive conversation with the Chief Executive Officer of Merck, one of our iconic New Jersey private sector corporations; a leader in healthcare not just in New Jersey but around the country and around the world. He gave me permission to tell everybody that Merck is contributing 300,000 masks to the cause which is extraordinary. I also thank Rich Tolson, bless his heart, a dear friend who's on top of the Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers who made a donation to Burlington County healthcare workers of masks. Pat Callahan will remind me that the email ppedonations@njsp.org (<mailto:ppedonations@njsp.org>) which is looking for any amount of personal amount of protective equipment has now had 550 emails incoming; yesterday I think it was 350, now it's 550, Pat, which is great.

And I've had good conversations but they're worried, as they should be with Charlie Wowkanec who runs the AFL-CIO here in New Jersey and Marc Perrone who's the UFCW head worldwide, never mind nationwide, a dear friend. And we've had exchanges this morning about again, reiterating the fact that retail workers particularly in supermarkets and pharmacies are on the frontend of this.

They are in their own right first responders and they're in there heroically working morning, noon and night. Doing whatever we can do to help get them equipment, to help give them advice on things as simple as wiping down surfaces and conveyor belts and keeping distance, and hand hygiene, etc. These folks want as much, and who can blame them, and more protection as soon as they can get it. So, I want to acknowledge that. I got a call or two on Ask the Governor last night to that very same effect and who can blame them?

On Monday, I gave a phone number for employees to report nonessential workplaces that are remaining open in violation of my order for them to close and move to a 100% work from home, except for very limited personnel exceptions. That line, as has been publicly reported, got so many calls in such a short period of time it crashed the system. Putting aside concerns with our system, the very fact that there were so many complaints in and of itself is a concern and problem.

Again, we are not making polite suggestions to your firm. Everyone needs to follow this order. So, if you see a business operating in violation of my executive order or you're working at one, please report them by visiting... And in this case we're going to send you in a different direction. I've mentioned now for several of our gatherings that there's a website which is now the central repository, www.covid19.nj.gov (<http://www.covid19.nj.gov>). We'd ask you to go there, www.covid19.nj.gov (<http://www.covid19.nj.gov>) and then go specifically www.covid19.nj.gov/violation (<http://www.covid19.nj.gov/violation>). www.covid19.nj.gov/violation (<http://www.covid19.nj.gov/violation>).

I will close by urging residents to maintain as we have their own high levels of preparedness. Continue to follow social distancing – don't fight it, follow it – which we know gives us our best chance to slow the spread of coronavirus. Continue to practice good hand hygiene, good respiratory hygiene. The surest way to protect yourself and your family and friends is to take to heart fully the need to follow the social distancing protocols and the rules we have put in place.

They are there for a reason, to flatten the curve, to cut off the surge and allow our healthcare system to manage the cases that are already out there, which we are identifying at an increasing rate. Again, we are repeating no gatherings, stay at home. By the way, we've gone a little high-tech for you here. Behind me, we have the same chart here, Judy, that we've had, and again, I want to say that we're going to do everything we can. We will leave no stone unturned. We will remain on the battlefield until the last second to make sure that we save as many lives as we can and prevent as many people from getting as sick as we can.

But even if we don't succeed and we have the exact same number of cases – and by the way, the volume under the red curve is the same as the volume under the blue curve. You can see at a minimum what we're trying to do is to smooth this as much as possible so that our healthcare system can withstand the amount of cases that they will see. We've got this on both; we've also got our projected temporary field hospitals from FEMA here, which Pat will speak to in a minute.

Again, our social distancing directives are not polite suggestions. They have been ordered to protect the greater public health and safety and to give us a better chance of slowing the spread of coronavirus. And as Pat knows more than anyone in this room, we will enforce these, and I want to give you a couple of examples hot off the press of enforcements.

Two summons were issued in Lakewood yesterday, one for a large gathering and another for a wedding at a private residence. In Union County, a defendant was arrested by the New Providence Police Department for a domestic violence-related charge. When he was being taken into custody – and I will preview upfront that this is the case of another knucklehead – he stated that he was travelling and had coronavirus, and started to cough at police and medical personnel. He was charged with a disorderly person obstruction and harassment.

In Gloucester and Camden Counties, those officers have now added disorderly persons charges when responding to other criminal cases. And this is now another tool that those officers have at their disposal and they are using it. So, we mean business. We take no joy in saying there are no gatherings but that's the only way we are going to be able to break the back of this virus.

I understand that this is not fun. I understand you can get restless, especially young children. I know that you want to go about your business, but while it's no time to panic it is no time for business as usual. We recognize there's impatience, but I would just remind everybody we're all in this together. This is much more likely to be a marathon than a sprint of a few days or a couple of weeks.

We all must persevere in order for us to come out stronger on the other side of this emergency, and we all must keep each other's and our own spirits up. Again, we are all in this together. We will all pull through this together. We're in an extraordinary state – I've said this before, on the one hand the most diverse American state and on the other hand, there's no single family in any other American state that can come close to the unity that we find in our New Jersey family.

Again, unequivocally we will get through this, not without mistake, not without being scathed. Look at the blessed loss of lives we've had already. But we will fight to the death to save lives, to keep the amount of sick persons as low as possible. And we will come through this I promise you stronger than ever before.

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

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon.

COVID-19 cases, as the Governor has shared, continue to rise rapidly in our state. We know that we're slightly behind New York and our trends are tracking our neighbor's. Cases of COVID-19 in New York state are rising exponentially, and Governor Cuomo has shared that they expect their peak in the next 14 to 21 days. Our exponential growth rate, based on the number of positive cases reported daily, is similar in northern New Jersey.

So, when we see this peak in New York, I think we can expect Bergen, Essex and Hudson Counties will follow the trend. We expect that all of our mitigation strategies will reduce the impact on our state but, as the Governor has shared, we must be prepared. That's why we're looking at every option to boost healthcare capacity and acquire more supplies right now.

As the Governor has mentioned, we are working with the Army Corps of Engineers to set up field hospitals in the state. The first one will go obviously in the northern part of the state. We also continue to work with existing healthcare systems to open up closed hospitals. The hospital has begun, in Woodbury the hospital has begun relocating the services from that location to other sites and has plans in place for expert decontamination and cleaning of the building.

Additionally, the Department continues to work with healthcare systems to open up closed wings in existing hospitals. We expect by early next week an additional 400 beds to open up, and within two weeks an additional 450. All of this work is vital for our preparedness efforts so that we are ready to respond to the increase in the cases that we are expecting.

As I said, confirmed cases are rising quickly. Today, we're reporting 736 cases for a total of over 4400 cases in the state. As the Governor said, 18 deaths have been reported to the Department. Four of the deaths were residents of Ocean County, three from Essex County, two from Monmouth County, and one each from Bergen, Burlington, Cumberland, Hudson, Middlesex, Morris, Passaic, Somerset and Union Counties. The breakdown is as follows: 18 deaths – 11 were male, 7 female. The age range was 52 to 93 years. 50% of the cases report underlying conditions. Another 9 are under investigation. Five of the cases were associated with long-term care facilities, and you know we're tracking that very carefully.

So, total we have 62 deaths related to COVID-19, 65% male, 35% female. Age range, a low of 30 to a high of 78. The mean is 74; the median is 79. We have had no deaths in individuals under the age of 30. 15 deaths or 24% were in individuals ages 30 to 60; and the remainder, 76% in those over 60 years of age. 48% at this point document underlying comorbid conditions, cardiovascular disease, chronic obstructive lung disease, diabetes myelitis, and obesity. And overall, 26% or 16 cases are from our long-term care facilities.

The county breakdown of our new cases is as follows: Atlantic 3, Bergen 89, Burlington 6, Camden 9, Cape May 1, Cumberland 1, Essex 38, Gloucester 4, Hudson 21, Mercer 22, Middlesex 38, Monmouth 26, Morris 17, Ocean 33, Passaic 34, Somerset 7, Sussex 5, Union 20, and Warren 3. And we are still gathering details on 359 of our new cases.

I'd also like to share with you that we have one possible case of an administrative staff member from the Department of Corrections. The individual works in administration, has had no contact with any members of the forensic population.

Additionally, we're closely monitoring our most vulnerable populations. Amongst them are the mental health population housed at our psychiatric facilities. We have 1400 patients at our four psychiatric facilities. 16 exhibited respiratory symptoms and were tested and one was returned positive. That individual is hospitalized. We have 4800 staff members, hospital staff members taking care of those individuals. 13 of them were tested. Four returned positive; three of those employees are home with moderate symptoms and one was hospitalized. All individuals that were determined to have contact or nexus with any of the positive individuals are in quarantine.

I know the news we've share with you today is concerning, however I assure you that our state and our healthcare partners are working around the clock to prepare for and respond to the increased spread of COVID-19. And as I have said in the past, we need you to continue doing your part. Stay home; wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds; cover coughs and sneezes. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces. If you are sick, please stay home and isolate yourself from your family. Do not share household items such as towels, eating utensils or cups. Protect yourself and your loved ones. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, a couple of quick... And if you said it, I apologize – I was making some notes. Did you have more color on the negatives today?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I do. I'm sorry I did not send that with you. Dr. Tan, do you have that?

Governor Phil Murphy: Again, we started yesterday. This is big step for us, an imperfect step but a big step in getting not just the positives, particularly from the private sector labs, but also the negatives.

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: So, as mentioned yesterday, we started presenting some of the data, the denominator and the numerator data. And so, of the commercial laboratories and hospital laboratories and public health laboratories that we have both the negatives and the positives, that represents about 90% of the test results that we have received. We so far have had over 14,000 tests performed, of which a little over 4000 tested positive, giving us an overall percent positive of about 29%.

Governor Phil Murphy: And I think if you'll recall yesterday that was 27%. The sort of glass half full from the nonmedical expert here – forgive me for practicing without a license – is by definition, we've been preaching to folks who are asymptomatic to not get tested, to step aside and let folks get to the front of the queue who are symptomatic. And so, there's some cause I guess for some sense of optimism that that cohort is sicker or at least a more symptomatic cohort than the average cohort. Christina?

State Epidemiologist Dr. Christina Tan: But just to add that because we are focusing the testing on people who have symptoms, it's important to note that even though the vast majority of those tested are negative for the virus that causes COVID-19, if you're sick still stay home because this is still in the middle of respiratory virus season. We still are, believe it or not, still seeing cases of flu B, flu A and other respiratory pathogens.

Governor Phil Murphy: That's a great point which we made yesterday and I'm very happy you made it today, is just 'cause you tested negative you're not Superman or Superwoman. Go home and take care of yourself and practice that.

I mentioned yesterday was the first day in the overnights that Bergen wasn't the lead county for positives. Today it is again far and away the lead county. Chris, can we assume that some of the Bergen Community College testing is in this data?

Assistant Commissioner of Health Chris Neuwirth: Yes, it is.

Governor Phil Murphy: I wish you wouldn't go on for so long but thank you for that. That's a fact. Bergen County's at 89. That far and away leads other counties. And as I have done the past few days, thank you Chris, all kidding aside. Total number of cases, Bergen continues to be far and away 819, Essex County 381, Middlesex 316, Monmouth 313, Union 262. And in

fairness, number six Hudson is right behind it, 260.

So, Judy and Dr. Tan, thank you for that. I'm sure we'll be coming back to you often in the question-and-answer. With that, I'd love to turn to Col. Pat Callahan to talk a little bit about how he and his team, and FEMA and the Army Corps and New Jersey Department of Health are approaching our hospital capacity. Pat, I can't thank you enough for everything you're doing. Please.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thank you, Governor, and to your point early on, with regard to our decades of partnership with the Army Corps of Engineers and FEMA – you can't say Army Corps of Engineers without FEMA. They are a tandem, one-two partner punch for the state of New Jersey, and I thank you, Col. Park and Pete, for being here. Just phenomenal efforts.

I think in the last several decades, the coastal risk management projects that we've done to include berms, seawalls, the channels that you maintain, the 117-mile coastline of intercoastal waterway for our maritime traffic, our commercial traffic, our fishermen, our recreational boaters. And I think from, since after Sandy hit, the Army Corps of Engineers and FEMA have done over \$800 million worth of projects for the State of New Jersey. So, I thank you both personally and professionally for that.

But I was reminded that Pete, the Sunday after Sandy had hit – and everybody can have that image of Manokin when 35 was wiped out, if you can remember that in your head – that Pete and his Engineers were on the ground that morning and Pete, as the lead, demanded an engineering plan by noon. And he didn't have it until 2:00 PM, so if you could work on your deadlines, Pete, that would be appreciated. And by Monday morning the contractors were there fixing that so Manokin could be restored. And that will never be forgotten, for you and that entire team.

And the fact that you maintain the Delaware Bay and River Channel that extends from the Bay all the way up to right here, right outside of this War Memorial, another phenomenal effort as well as the projects that you do with environmental protection. So, thank you on behalf of every New Jerseyan, and thank you both and your FEMA partners for just being tremendous collaborators with us.

With regard to this project and what we're calling this Hospital Capacity Relief Team, members of the Department of Health, members of the Army Corps, FEMA, New Jersey National Guard, the State Police. I think what's happened in the last six days, it's really a phenomenal effort. I think from my standpoint, nothing more than in awe. Twenty hospitals have been visited physically and over 71 hospitals in less than a week have been assessed in order to assist us in this effort, and whether that's looking at mothballed hospitals, dormant wings, all of those things that need to go into that assessment in order to obviously be ready for what we think and are fairly certain is coming according to the Commissioner and what we've been hearing with regard to the modeling.

And the fact that these four, these medical stations are coming is just phenomenal, too. And Lt. Col. Park is the lead out of Philadelphia District who oversees that, to make sure that design layout, that when they are strategically placed as planned here. As we said yesterday, where that fourth one will go, we'll certainly try to get that identified soon. The fact that once again, the Army Corps of Engineers, whether it's a hurricane, whether it's protecting our coast, and now this new type of storm that is hitting New Jersey – and in short order, when the bell rang there you are again, the Army Corps of Engineers, to make sure that we are able to protect the lives and the health of our citizens.

So, we're looking forward to a rapid timeline, understanding, as the Governor said, sometimes you come across a couple of obstacles. But I've seen the Army Corps and FEMA in action before and there is absolutely no obstacle that they won't overcome. So, I am sure that in partnership with all of those aforementioned agencies, we're going to get this done.

Today, we had an Incident Management Team across the river with the Army Corps of Engineers and FEMA, New York National Guard, Jersey National Guard watching how they're getting theirs done. So, if there's anything we can learn even in that short order that makes things in New Jersey go smoothly and more effectively, that's what we're going to do. And I'm certain that that trip over to New York was worthwhile for New Jersey. We'll be able to be better prepared when we start standing up our four field medical stations. So, thanks to you both again, Lt. Col. Park and Pete. Governor?

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Pat. I'm just looking for Mahen. Mahen, I think one, if it's not going to – and it could violate classified space; Jared will correct me if I'm wrong. But assuming it doesn't violate any proprietary information, I think having a couple of pictures up here of what the working team at the ROIC looks like; and to be able to have Pat or somebody literally in one of our upcoming sessions go through and say, "This is Sean Kilcomons, he's New Jersey State Police Captain; this is Lt. Col. Park, New Jersey National Guard," to see all the various elements of government around, socially distancing I hope but around in a room working together in an all of government – in this case by the way, including all across state including significant federal participation. I think that would be valuable to see, so just a thought.

Q&A Session:

Matt Arco, Star-Ledger: Thanks, Governor. Colonel, I was just wondering on the enforcement side if you have any additional numbers, any additional information you can share. And Governor, I'm a little bit confused about what you said about the testing in New Jersey a little bit earlier, because from what we're seeing, New Jersey's testing residents at a rate that's less than a third of what New York is testing. And I'm curious, I wanted to ask you about that – is that because of a lack of test kits or is it because of testing being limited at state labs? We've heard from a lot of folks of stories of people who are being turned away from testing.

Governor Phil Murphy: Okay. Pat, do you want to hit compliance first?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: We have, after yesterday's press conference I had talked about the ROIC. And I just wanted to make sure we weren't duplicating efforts, and I talked to the Attorney General's Office. They had asked all of their 21 County Prosecutors to report to them so we just had to work out a few of the details today with regards to that channel, 'cause technically the Attorney General oversees them, so for us to ask... So, we just wanted to make sure that reporting process was fluid and appropriate, Matt, and moving forward we will be able to report out on, as the Governor said, hopefully low numbers. But some of the egregious behavior we've seen over the past few days is not going to be tolerated, and those individuals will be summoned and charged and prosecuted.

Governor Phil Murphy: We just had a conversation offline before coming over here on this front. It does appear that most folks are compliant. So, I think our collective responsibility is to not just generally remind folks but to give you two or three, as we've done today, explicit examples. I hope we have none going forward. But if we do have them we want to put them up in lights, particularly people who are being jerks and saying stupid things and coughing on people. There's just no time for that. But I think it's our sense the compliance is at a very high rate. I heard the Police Commissioner in New York City say the same thing earlier today and that's a tribute to folks. Maybe some got there late but folks have embraced that this is for real, that we're not crying wolf up here; and the extent to which they monitor themselves and behave and don't gather and keep their social distance, I think overwhelmingly folks realize that's highly correlated with getting through this crisis faster and less scathed.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: I would just say that I hope the deterrent factor is not the criminal charge; the deterrent factor is what the mitigation factor is all about in keeping people isolated.

Governor Phil Murphy: The deterrent factor is that they're going to get sick otherwise or get other people sick. On testing, I was actually comparing to California, not New York, so you may well be right on New York, Matt. I actually don't know. But I think if you look at our numbers we're about, you know, we're in the top handful from the get-go on testing. And again, I can't compare. It's possible that New York is in a better place. But I do want to say a couple of things about testing, one of which I alluded to over the past couple of days and I want to repeat it today.

First, there's pent-up demand. So, at all of these sites, there are more people that want to get tested, even symptomatic people, than can get tested. And they are throwing asymptomatic people out of the line. Chris, that's correct, right? So, if you show up and you think you can sneak through and you're among the worried well, you can't, number one. Number two, it is expanding as I mentioned. Recently we opened in Union County with our help, it's really a county-based program. Passaic County is now open; Essex County is on the verge of opening.

There is without question attention though, Matt, in terms of the supply that you need, both of the stuff that you need to take the specimen; the protective personal equipment that the persons need; and bodies, healthcare workers to actually be there doing that. So, there's two tensions. One is actually, particularly... Actually, all three of those, we're constrained in all three. In the first two, we could really use a big slug more coming out of the federal government. So, Chris and Pat will correct me if I'm wrong, but at the two FEMA sites we've gotten test kits for a capacity of 2500 a week. And so, that means you're doing say 300, 350 a day in order to smooth that into a week. I think at Bergen Community College day one we were over 600 so that's been more constrained, and we've got to make sure that those raw materials are coming not just this week but next week and the week after.

And so, there is without question that constraint. But there's another one, with one big, important exception – and my healthcare experts will correct me if I'm wrong on this. We're going to have a fork in the road sooner than later between the allocation of all of the above on one hand to testing versus to care. And that's something we've started to talk about because we want people to anticipate that could be a reality. Now, less of the specimen collection obviously than the PPE and the healthcare workers, and I don't think Judy would disagree with this. I think she's probably in violent agreement. So, that's just something. That's not a constraint as we sit here today but it's going to be increasingly constrained.

What's the big footnote to that? There's an enormous amount, and Christina knows more about this – she's forgotten more about it than I'll ever know. There's an enormous amount of momentum around a variety of innovative tests. And if any of that comes to fruition in scale, and that's the key part here I think, not just that they're accurate but they're in scale; and you could get something where basically you could do it at home without a healthcare worker in the extreme, then all bets are off on the tension of what I just said – either in supplies from the federal government or between testing on the one hand and care on the other. That would be a really good development, I think everyone would agree. You'd have far more mass testing, which gives us the data to be able to manage this more aggressively, and you would not be foregoing supplies or workers into the testing side that we need on the care side. I hope that helped.

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: Hi, I have a little bit of buckshot here. I apologize for it but I'm asking a couple of questions for another news outlet as well. Can you explain who is determining what patients will be going where with these new field hospitals? Can you also explain why some of these testing sites, like in Bergen and Monmouth, have different procedures than in some of the county-run places like Passaic and it sounds like Essex as well? And specifically for the Health Commissioner, do you have any specific interpretation of, for the second day in a row, the number of positive tests going down? And then, if I could ask two questions for Spotlight: first responders – is the state tracking infections for first responders statewide and are you considering any policy to prioritize or expedite testing for first responders?

Governor Phil Murphy: Let me just make a couple of general comments, Judy, and then throw it to you. The second one was are we testing and tracking first responders and the first was are there any new policies being considered?

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: Correct.

Governor Phil Murphy: The only one I want to comment on, Judy, is this, and tell me if you all see this differently – different testing sites having different protocols. By the way, Matt, one part of your question I didn't answer – I don't think backend testing is a constraint right now. The commercial labs have been ramping up. Unless you tell me otherwise, somebody, I don't think that is a constraint. So, I meant to say that in my answer.

Testing sites are different because the simple reason I believe – they have different hosts. The end result is not different in terms of the efficacy of the tests, but FEMA is our partner at both Bergen Community College and at the PNC Bank Arts Center; as opposed to on the other hand whatever a particular hospital system, Hudson Regional, might be doing or Hackensack or in particular the three counties that have been... To the best of my knowledge three counties now, right? So, it's Union, Passaic and then tomorrow Essex. Different sponsors, different folks actually running it. Is that fair to say?

Do you want to tackle the other ones, Judy?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: The variability in the results, there's no relevance to that. It's when all of the results are done for the day at a certain point in time and they're finished and they're reported. We expect to see variability and we do expect to see the number of positives increase for a period of time.

As far as what patients go where, we're going to be working with the... We've separate the state into regions – north, central and south. And we'll be working with the CEOs of the Level I Trauma Centers to work collaboratively within the region to disperse patients not according to diagnoses but according to the needs of the patient – critical care or medical/surgical. We do expect that the hospitals will be the center of the critical care patients no matter their diagnosis, by the way, 'cause remember, patients are still coming into the hospital that require care with different diagnoses.

So, we want to keep the intensivists, the respiratory therapists, the critical care nurses all on one campus because we do expect critical care to increase significantly. And then, the other patients will be dispersed according to need and acuity of the patient.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, anything on infection rates of first responders and any expected policies from anyone up here?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Well, we have guidance for first responders on our website and also on the CDC website. I have not gotten any specific information on testing of first responders.

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: We do. We obviously as the State Police track all of our enlisted and civilians. We had that discussion with the Attorney General and all the police chiefs on Friday and discussed this. And on the priority testing, we're not there at this juncture. I talked to the Commissioner of Boston yesterday – they are. They have a certain site for them and we talk about protecting those that protect us, but we're struggling with that balance of how to set that up for first responders and healthcare workers. And we just have not, quite frankly have not worked that piece out.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you for that. Elise, good afternoon.

Elise Young, Bloomberg: Hi, good afternoon. The \$2 trillion stimulus is far less than you had suggested the country needs. You suggested \$3 trillion to \$4 trillion. Governor Cuomo is absolutely outraged about it. He said it's a drop in the bucket, what New York state would get. I was wondering if you had contacted him regarding that and what are your sentiments about the \$2 trillion versus what you believed the country needed?

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, I have not spoken to him specifically about this. I think he's doing a great job by the way, so I take my hat off to him. And as he said yesterday in many respects he is... I don't think he used the phrase 'canary in the coalmine' but that's the phrase I'll use. He's living this; I think we're right behind him, unfortunately. But I think he's doing an extraordinary job.

Elise, I think this is a big step in the right direction. Is it everything we want? It is not. But I'm in the category of let's not let the perfect be the enemy of the good. I listed a bunch of buckets which are really important to our state – direct cash assistance, unemployment insurance, expansion of the definition of who gets that, daycare support for essential personnel, small business support, hospital support, mass transit support. I was in the and I have been in the \$3 trillion plus range; to be able to get \$2 trillion in a matter of days in this day and age with bipartisan support God willing, it isn't everything. Let there be no doubt about it. We'll likely need more but I think it's a big step in the right direction and we'll take it, and it's going to make a difference including direct cash on the barrel to individuals and their kids. It's a big boost. Again, not everything but it's a big step in the right direction.

David Levinsky, Burlington County Times: A couple questions if I may. First, with regard to the FEMA field hospitals, I know we've got the three of them up on the board there. There was discussion about where the fourth one would be; we weren't sure yet. Is there any update on where that facility is going to be located? And perhaps the Lt. Col. could discuss with us or maybe, I don't know, maybe Col. Callahan can talk about specifically you had mentioned these facilities could be built within days or weeks, or days and weeks I believe you said. So, specifically are they going to begin to be constructed right away? Do we know, will it take a week or two weeks or three weeks to be actually constructed, etc., etc.? And then, my second question for you,

Governor, is you had mentioned this whole issue – and we've heard it's a huge issue – about businesses not, private businesses not complying and still forcing workers to come in and they're upset. And the system crashed there were so many calls, so now we're sending them to the website. But what is the plan in terms of who's going to respond to these complaints? Will fines be threatened? Will someone call them and say, "Look, cut the crap," as we were talking about the other day? Again, not to harp on penalties but it seems that some people don't respond unless there are penalties threatened and will there be a follow-up? Will somebody go back a week later and say, "What are you guys doing?"

Governor Phil Murphy: While Pat answers your two questions about the hospitals I'm going to give Matt Platkin, who's somewhere here, a head's up. I may need him on that, what do we do when someone weighs in? I will say this on the second question, we were somewhat taken aback if not quite taken aback by the amount of incomings we got, which is why again, and I want to give Beth Novek, our Chief Innovation Officer, a big shoutout; which his why this website's a much more easily-accessed and easily-maintained place to lodge those complaints. But Pat, why don't you start?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Thanks, David. With regard to, and if Lt. Col. Park wants to add anything, generally it's about a seven to ten days if I'm not mistaken. But again, keep in mind that's with no obstacles and we're not really expecting any. So, I think that timeline, I think the first one if I'm not mistaken – again, always subject to change. But due to the fact that north Jersey is where the hot spot is generally, so we're going to start at that Meadowlands Exposition with the first one. And again, that planning session, that is why the team was over in New York this morning, David, trying to make sure that when we hit the ground running on the first one, that we meet the timeline and the goals that we set for ourselves. Fair to say, Colonel?

Lt. Col. David Park, US Army Corps of Engineers: So, I guess from the late planning session late night – and I don't know if Col. Callahan or Governor, that you got the update. But the planning priorities as far as the four FMS units that we're planning for is that the fourth one will go into the Edison Center, Jersey Convention Center so that will have two is our planning guidance that we've gotten. And you're correct, Col., in that the first Meadowlands should take... I mean, we'll do everything in our power to get it done as quickly as possible, within the timeline that we've been given about seven or eight days. We're hoping to have it done quicker than that if possible obviously.

The other two locations at the Edison and Atlantic City, we're looking to expand that past the FMS units. Further discussions obviously with FEMA and the state partners but those have a larger capacity for additional beds that we're looking at for the surge. And based off of the Commissioner's priorities we're kind of looking to expand those as well.

Governor Phil Murphy: Thank you, Lt. Col. Park. For your question number two, in terms of if somebody comes onto the website and says, "My employer is not playing ball here. They're not encouraging work from home, they're not encouraging social distancing," what do we do with it?

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: So, the complaint will come in through the form into OEM. They'll review it and process it and make sure it gets into the appropriate channel. Some may go to law enforcement, some may go to Division of Consumer Affairs or other parts of state government that will enforce it. But just as a general matter, I think what the Col. said earlier is true. We get a daily law enforcement readout every morning. There's broad compliance. The number of complaints are concerning and we're going to enforce them, but generally speaking I think the story is a good one about the reaction in New Jersey.

Governor Phil Murphy: So, more on that. May I ask, give us a couple of days with the website now back up and running and see. And Matt, as he has done, each morning I get a few examples of people who are not playing ball with large gatherings. We'll look at the evidence that comes in there as well.

Reporter: Follow-up on the timeline for the field hospitals. Would it be safe to say that the hospitals in Edison and Atlantic City might be up and running within the next month? And then, a question about your executive order on daycare. We had a question, a clarification on children of essential workers. Can you kind of break down who exactly is eligible for the daycares that would be able to stay open?

Governor Phil Murphy: Yep. Pat, real quick on the... Col., it feels that way, right? You're talking days to a week for number one and you're talking several weeks I think for the others. Is that fair to say?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: Within a month for the other two.

Governor Phil Murphy: And then, on the second question we actually had a meeting. We're still machining this. It is at a minimum obviously healthcare workers and first responders. Part of the reason I was on, for instance, today with some of the labor leaders is to make sure that essential retail folks are at least considered for part of this. But we'll owe guidance to you all as to exactly what that means. It's part of the reason why we're giving ourselves a couple of days to certify that folks will be prepared to do this by Friday; and then, if you're not we're going to shut you down on April 1st which is next Wednesday I believe. Matt, is that fair in terms of the process here? He'll take a microphone and correct the record.

Chief Counsel Matt Platkin: There's six categories of workers that we enumerated in the order: healthcare workers; law enforcement personnel; first responders; individuals who are employed at the childcare centers that will be open – they can give daycare to themselves; staff who provide essential services, essential social services for example; and then essential government employees in addition to the retail workers the Governor mentioned. The Commissioner of DCF has authority to supplement that list as we do the preparations but those are the first six that we've identified.

Governor Phil Murphy: And as you've seen in the executive order for instance on defining essential businesses, we've been reasonable in considering incomings and tweaked it where we had to. We're likely not going to do a whole lot more tweaking. We've got to sort of run the place hunkered down as it is right now. Thank you. Sir?

Alex Roubian, NJ2AS: Hola, Governor, Alejandro again.

Governor Phil Murphy: Nice to see you.

Alex Roubian, NJ2AS: Good to see you as well. Due to your executive actions to close down gun stores saying they're not essential, the poorest minorities living in the most dangerous cities with the highest crime rates now have absolutely no way of buying a firearm. I lived in Newark and I understand this firsthand. You surround yourself with armed guards so clearly you understand the benefit of the Second Amendment. At this very moment, how can a New Jersey resident who isn't already a gun owner exercise their Second Amendment rights?

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah listen, first of all it's good to have you back. You and I, I think, have a philosophical disagreement at a very basic level in the sense of the broad question of what does a safer society look like? And a safer society for my taste has fewer guns and not more guns, and that the guns that do exist are in the hands of the right people, particularly trained members of law enforcement like the guy to my left who's got a pistol on his hip. I don't know if there's any more color to add beyond that. Is there any other... I mean, it is what it is. I don't want to be disrespectful but it is what it is. And again, we think, among other thing crime... Pat's been tracking crime and it's down, and let's hope it stays down. But we're very comfortable where we landed on that. Thank you. Let's go with you again. We'll get this out of your system and mine.

Alex Roubian, NJ2AS: Well, it's not in my system; it's part of the Constitution. So, people do have the right to defend themselves.

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, I respect the Second Amendment. I just want to make sure.

Alex Roubian, NJ2AS: I understand that. You have two armed guards here, so clearly you understand it and respect it. But there's people that live in fear every day. We're seeing a lot of people coming forward wanting to buy a gun for self-defense and they don't have that ability now because of your executive action. They don't have the leisures that you do as a government official. And if less guns reduce crime will you give up your personal bodyguards and call and wait for the police?

Governor Phil Murphy: Listen, my personal bodyguards is not my decision. It's his decision and you can deal with him offline. I've got exactly not one complaint from anybody that they were trying to buy a gun and they couldn't, other than from you and I respect that. But beyond that I'm going to stay with what I've said already. Thank you for coming out. Dave?

David Levinsky, Burlington County Times: You have outlined the importance of daycare for essential workers in the state to make sure their kids are being watched so they can do their jobs. All of the other people in New Jersey are at home and many of them have kids as well. Has the state given any thought to how that should be handled in terms of community daycare situations or is this just something that people are going to have to work out themselves?

Governor Phil Murphy: Yeah, so I mentioned this in my remarks and this will run through the Office of Emergency Management and get down to the county levels if need be. If we think there are gaps in the system we will work with counties to try to figure out stopgap measures. Again, we're hoping we're not in this position forever, right? But we do think we're in this position for awhile, but we would look at stopgap measures, maybe school-based.

There's sort of two driving principles there that got us to this point. Number one, the point actually that's been the case all along, which is that we need to provide, particularly with school being out up and down the state we need to provide healthcare workers, first responders, essential workers with support – otherwise they can't do their job. And we just have no choice. And as I mentioned, the past couple of days we were trying not to tilt the system all at once.

The second thing, and Senator Vitale and I had a good conversation about this Saturday night, and his point and the healthcare point is how can you treat two-year-old's differently than you're treating four-year-old's and five-year-old's and think that there's a real bright line as a health matter, fair to say, between those two populations? You're sort of either in or you're out, and as I've said from the get-go we couldn't get all of those there at the same time. So, we've finally, you know, we've gotten to the point where we feel like we can now put a plan in place that's responsible.

But the short answer is there'll be a county-based, it'll run through the Office of Emergency Management into the counties. It'll have stopgap measures that will stand up if need be.

Dustin Racioppi, Bergen Record: Just two quick ones and I'm going to keep my hands to myself. I think it was Dr. Birx from the White House yesterday who recommended a 14-day quarantine for people leaving New York. Do you agree with that, and are you worried about New Yorkers leaving and coming to different parts of New Jersey but especially the Jersey Shore area?

Governor Phil Murphy: I'm going to actually start with this and then I'd love to turn it over to the experts. I heard Dr. Birx, and by the way, Dr. Birx is a star. So yeah, I don't know where we'd be without her. She's an ambassador; I have to say as a fellow ambassador, I have to say that. I look at her and Dr. Fauci as, if they had Time Women and Men of the Year, Persons of the Year I think they're my nominees right now.

We live in Metro New York; we may be in New Jersey. I like to think of New York by the way as Greater New Jersey just to clarify that but we live in metro New York. We don't have a whole lot of people crossing the Hudson these days. If you look at NJ Transit, ridership down 90%. Now, that includes the within state piece but it also is a proxy. Today's question, the good news is we got a lot of compliance overwhelmingly on work from home.

I'll give you one example. I spoke to the President of Goldman Sachs, and I want to give them a shoutout again for standing tall as a corporate citizen. I spoke to him the other day. They have 13,000 people in metro New York, so that's New York City, Jersey City, Princeton and I think they're in Greenwich, Connecticut. And this day, this was on Monday, they had 500 or 600 people in the office out of 13,000. So, that's over 95% of their people are working from home.

So, we're in the broad definition of metro New York. We're living it so we've got our own, you know, we've got a screaming stay at home policy, aggressively enforced social distancing in place, work from home, separate, no gatherings, etc. So, it doesn't really impact our day-in and day-out reality because we're on a different side of the river but we're in the same bucket.

I have said forcefully for New Yorkers, New Jerseyans, a guy from Pennsylvania came at me pretty hard yesterday – don't go to the shore. That's not just for New Yorkers but don't go to the shore. It's intoxicating at the first cut, but the fact of the matter is, particularly in the offseason we don't have the healthcare infrastructure on the shore as exists in other counties where folks have permanent homes in the state, and certainly not as much as we have in New York City or Philadelphia or other places. So, that's my quick answer. Judy, would you want to come in behind that?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: Dr. Chan and I spent a lot of time on the phone yesterday after that pronouncement and we were going through the same iteration that the Governor was. Because of all of the aggressive social distancing and the mandates in New Jersey, we believe that most of the individuals are working at home if they're from New York; they're working at home. We believe that the maintenance of the social distancing and the message we've been giving out – if you don't feel well, if you have respiratory symptoms, please stay home, isolate yourself, protect yourself and your family. And we didn't have anything more to add except that after about 45 minutes on the phone we decided that we think we're okay in New Jersey right now.

Governor Phil Murphy: Amen, thank you for that. Matt?

Matt Arco, Star Ledger: Really, two quick things. First of all, on the popup sites just curious why it's going to be in Hudson instead of Bergen, just considering the amount of cases that are in Bergen. And also, Judy, just going back, you mentioned that Governor Cuomo had shared they expect the peak in the next 14 to 21 days and that we were tracking sort of similarly. Does that mean that you expect peak in those three hard-hit counties to be two to three weeks away?

Governor Phil Murphy: May I say on the first one, I think this is because we've got an opportunity to have a physical space that we can control, and it's no magic that it's in Hudson versus Bergen. Is that fair to say, guys?

State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan: That's fair. It's the footprint of that exposition center if I'm not mistaken, Governor. That's what offers it as such a viable site for that first field medical station.

Governor Phil Murphy: Judy, on peaking, how do you react?

Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli: I've talked a lot about predictive monitoring and we're looking at that right now. We'll have something for you fairly quickly on that. We've asked the hospitals and the healthcare providers in those counties to just be aware. If they're saying 14 to 21 days there's a good possibility that they're going to see a peak after that, probably 21 to could be 60 days even, but just to be aware of it. But we're also right now seeing some strain in the northern counties, particularly around critical care. So, we've put out a call with the feds for 400 ventilators. We're tracking every day with some of those hospitals up there, with phone calls. Critical care right now is pretty stressed. So, the algorithms are good but what's happening boots on the ground is what we're monitoring more carefully.

Governor Phil Murphy: I'll just conclude if I could. First of all, Mahen will correct me if I'm wrong, tomorrow we're going to do it 2:00 here. There is a VTC with the President and Vice President at noon so we were trying to be on time today. We were right on time I'm proud to say. We will do our best tomorrow to be on time subject to how long that runs.

A couple of things. There were a couple things that came out yesterday that sort of were constant themes, one of which we just discussed, this question of if you've been in New York what should your habit be when you leave New York? And I think we've addressed that.

The other one, which I glanced on earlier and I want to just come back to, this question of when can we start to open things back up? And I'll be the happiest guy in New Jersey, among the happiest guys in America if we can gradually begin to open our economy and our society back up at some point that's not too far down the road. There'll be nothing that would give me more joy. I suspect I'm joined in violent agreement by my colleagues up here.

But I would just say two or three important cautionary footnotes. Number one, again, we're calling this as straight as we can. We're giving you the facts as straight as we see them. We just don't see that in the near term. We're making our decisions at every step, as we have since January, on the basis of facts, data, science, medical and health inputs. We just don't see it, number one.

Secondly, again, I'm not a health expert here but I think the order of business is pretty clear to us, that we break the back of the coronavirus first and then we begin to open up the economy and society. But if we somehow transpose those steps and we begin to prematurely open things up, I believe we only throw gasoline on the fire of the virus; and that we pay a far bigger price down the road.

And finally, to repeat with as much passion and conviction as I can, we will leave no stone unturned. There is no price that's too high to save any one precious life in this state. We've already lost 62 precious lives. We will do everything in our power to continue to try to not lose more than we have to. That's who we are as a country and that's who we are as a state. That doesn't mean we're going to succeed every time out, but again, there is no price beyond that which we are prepared to pay to save a life in this state and to keep the toll as low as we can.

We know the numbers are going up. We will do everything in our power to keep them from going up more than they have to.

I want to thank the Commissioner of Health, Judy Persichilli. Dr. Tan, thank you. I want to thank Col. Callahan for your being here. Chris, thank you, Assistant Commissioner, for everything. Director of Homeland Security Jared Maples, Lt. Col. Park, Pete Tranchik – welcome back to Jersey belatedly. Thanks, each and every one of you again. We will be with you again tomorrow at 2:00 PM. Thank you.

Governor Phil Murphy

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