



AG's Message	Ask the AG
Contact OAG	About OAG
OAG News	OAG FAQs
OAG Library	Employment
OAG Grants	Proposed Rules
OAG History	Services A-Z

Governor's Office
Otras Noticias en Español (OAG)
Civil Rights (Division of)
Consumer Affairs (Division of)
Criminal Justice (Division of)
Election Law Enforcement Comm.
Gaming Enforcement (Div. of)
Highway Traffic Safety (Division of)
Insurance Fraud Prosecutor (Office of)
Juvenile Justice Commission
State Police (Division of NJ)
Law (Division of)

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

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:

- **Newark Enforcement.** The Newark Police Department's COVID-19 task force issued 38 summonses for violations of the emergency orders in enforcement actions yesterday, April 6.
- **Oscar Diaz, 40, of Elizabeth,** was charged last night, April 6, with second-degree terroristic threats during an emergency, third-degree aggravated assault on an officer, third-degree resisting arrest, fourth-degree throwing bodily fluid at an officer, obstruction (disorderly persons offense) and simple assault/domestic violence. Police responded to a domestic violence call reporting a stabbing. Diaz, who had blood on his face and shirt, allegedly kicked, punched and pushed officers in an attempt to keep them from entering the residence, causing officers to use pepper spray. As Diaz was being physically escorted by officers to a patrol car, he allegedly yelled "COVID! COVID!," coughed on the officers, and attempted to spit on them.
- **Dasia Syms, 31, of Camden,** was charged on Sunday, April 5, with fourth-degree causing or risking widespread injury, fourth-degree contempt, disorderly conduct, and failure to disperse (disorderly persons offense). Camden police officers discovered a large group of people outside and exiting a reside. Willow Walk. When police advised the group to disperse and go home because of the state of emergency, Syms allegedly cursed and said "I do not have to go anywhere," creating a scene. She then allegedly stated she had the coronavirus and began to cough. There were more than five people present when she coughed, including officers.
- **Nikolas Whitehill, 39, of Parsippany,** was charged with violating the emergency orders. Police were called about a domestic matter involving Whitehill and his estranged wife. By court order, the wife has sole possession of their house, but Whitehill is permitted to enter the house on alternating dates, when the victim is not home, to feed their fish. The wife provided police with security footage from March 28 of Whitehill alone inside the house, where he was coughing on objects and touching objects, saying he had "the rona" and "Do you want the rona?"

- **Thomas J. Wilson, 56, of Monroe Township**, was charged with violating the emergency orders on Sunday, April 5, for having a gathering of 15 to 20 people in the backyard of his house in Seaside Park.
- **Ryan Coolahan, 24, of Monmouth Beach**, was charged on Saturday, April 4, with criminal trespass and violation of the emergency orders, both disorderly persons offenses. Sea Bright Police responded to an alarm at the Monmouth Beach municipal pavilion, which had been closed to the public due to the pandemic, with temporary fencing placed around the building. When police arrived, they found Coolhan inside the pavilion smoking and playing music.
- **Dominic Affatoto, 35, of Maple Shade**, was charged on April 1 by the Pennsauken Police with violating the emergency orders. Police found Affatoto fishing off of a boat ramp in a park that is closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Angel Martinez, 34, of Camden**, was charged on the night of April 4 with two violations of the emergency orders. Police responded to a gathering on North 6th Street in Camden. When Martinez was served with a warning about gatherings, he ripped it up and discarded it, saying he does not care about getting a fine because he has money in the bank. The group dispersed
- **Trenton Enforcement.** Police in Trenton issued two summonses for violations of the emergency orders and ordered one non-essential business closed in enforcement actions yesterday, April 6.

“Our police officers are working bravely and tirelessly every day to protect us during this health crisis. Regrettably, they are being called upon far too often to deal with people violating the emergency orders— or what is more egregious, people using the virus to spread fear or impede officers in their vital work,” said Attorney General Grewal. “Staying home and maintaining social distance isn’t just the best advice to stay healthy, it’s the law. Make no mistake, we will do everything in our power to keep our residents and officers safe, and that means we won’t hesitate to file charges against violators.”

“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. “Because lives are at stake, enforcement action will be taken without hesitation against those who are blatantly placing the lives of others at risk.”

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. The defendant Diaz is similarly charged for his 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, while fourth-degree charges carry a sentence of up to 18 months in prison and a fine of up to \$10,000.

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

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 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.

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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[News Index Page](#) | [top](#)

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