

U.S. coronavirus cases surpass 200,000 with more than 5,000 deaths



New York, April 2 (RHC)-- The number of coronavirus cases in the United States surpassed 200,000 on Wednesday as officials warned spikes in confirmed cases may soon be seen outside of large city centres.

At his daily briefing on Wednesday, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo said his state accounted for more than 83,000 of the total coronavirus infections and 1,941 of the deaths. Neighbouring New Jersey was the second-hardest hit state, with more than 18,000 cases and 267 deaths.

In New York alone, currently the epicentre of U.S. outbreak, 12,226 people remain hospitalised, an increase of 1,297 in the past 24 hours, more than 3,000 of them in intensive care. Cuomo stressed that more than 6,000 patients had been treated and released from hospitals in the state.

"Just the way it's gone through rural New York, it will go through rural America," Cuomo said. "To the extent, people watch their nightly news in Kansas and say, 'Well, this is a New York problem', that's not what these numbers say. It says it's a New York problem today. Tomorrow, it's a Kansas problem and a Texas problem and a New Mexico problem." More than 5,000 people have now died from the virus

across the United States.

Cuomo also narrowed earlier projections about when New York would see a peak in the number of new cases, saying on Wednesday that if New York residents can adhere to minimal social distancing guidelines the apex of the epidemic could come at the end of April. To that end, he announced that all New York City playgrounds would be closed. Parks will remain open, he said.

Data released by the city shows that the disease is having a disproportionate effect in certain neighbourhoods, mainly Brooklyn and Queens on the eastern side of the sprawling city. The city's ambulance system and police department are under increasing stress from the pandemic, with nearly a quarter of the city's emergency medical service workers out sick, according to the Fire Department. In all, 2,800 members of the Fire Department are sidelined, including about 950 of the city's 4,300 EMS workers.

Nearly 16 percent of the New York Police Department's uniformed force is now out sick. More than 1,000 officers have tested positive for the virus.

Authorities are racing to build temporary hospitals in locations including Central Park, the Jacob K Javits Convention Center, a cruise ship terminal and a sports complex to handle an expected surge in patients.

The projection of 93,000 total deaths from coronavirus across the U.S. came from a Bill Gates Foundation-funded organization working with the state of New York, Cuomo said. He added that 16,000 of those projected deaths would be in the state of New York alone. The White House on Tuesday projected the death toll in the US could be between 100,000 and 240,000 if social distancing practices and other measures were maintained.

Cuomo said the best way to reverse the current isolation policies that have brought the US economy to a halt and left the majority of Americans virtually homebound is to increase the frequency and availability of tests. He likened the current situation to a "bad groundhog movie".

"You come up with testing and rapid testing, not only do you get the economy running, you end the anxiety. The anxiety is what is most oppressive here. Not knowing," he said. "Not knowing when this is going to end. The anxiety of dealing with this isolation day after day after day. It's like a bad groundhog movie.

"Testing is going to be the best mechanism to try to work through that anxiety," Cuomo said.

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