

U.S. tops 2.5 million coronavirus cases as reopenings roll back



Washington, June 28 (RHC)-- The United States has surpassed 2.5 million confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus amid the global pandemic. To date, more than 125,000 people have died from the coronavirus in the United States -- the most of any country -- as global cases reached 10 million and deaths across the world near 500,000 since the virus first emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan last December.

The U.S. reached the milestone over the weekend, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University, amid a surge of infections in southern and western states and rural regions that had not been as affected when the virus was first confirmed in the U.S. in February. On Saturday, for the third consecutive day, new U.S. cases rose by more than 40,000 infections.

Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar, appearing on CNN and NBC on Sunday, warned that "the window is closing" for the U.S. to take action to effectively curb the coronavirus. He urged Americans "to act responsibly" by social distancing and wearing face masks especially in the newly emerging "hot zones."

Five populous states in the west and south -- Florida, Arizona, South Carolina, Georgia, and Nevada -- on Saturday also reported record daily highs for new coronavirus cases. On the west coast, California and Washington, DC, which were hit hard early in the outbreak, have also seen a troubling rise, prompting state leaders to slow reopening plans.

Meanwhile, an array of less-populated states and counties have seen an increase in daily cases, despite largely escaping the earlier surges. Idaho, Oklahoma, and Kansas have seen relative surges in their number of daily reported cases. Many rural counties in California, Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, Texas and Florida saw their total number of cases double from April 19 to April 26, according to The Associated Press news agency.

The increase has prompted Vice President Mike Pence to cancel campaign events for the upcoming presidential election in Florida and Arizona "out of an abundance of caution," according to the campaign.

The shifting situation in the U.S. has created a distinct divide, with some areas that were initially hardest hit, and which imposed some of the harshest lockdowns, including New York and its neighbouring states, reporting declining cases and moving ahead with reopening plans.

Several states where cases are surging have been criticised for beginning to reopen too early, or not properly signalling to residents the severity of the outbreak and the precautions that need to be taken.

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