

Groton Daily Independent

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"FAMILY FACES ARE MAGIC MIRRORS. LOOKING AT PEOPLE WHO BELONG TO US, WE SEE THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE."

-GAIL LUMET BUCKLEY-

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans

Community Spread of COVID-ID in Brown, Marshall counties

Brown and Marshall counties have now been considered community spread for COVID-19.

The COVID-19 virus has closed down businesses with many offering only carry out or curbside delivery, not allowing customers into the stores.

Even the churches have closed with services being livestreamed on Facebook or some other means of livestreaming.

People have been losing their jobs as stores close up. Congress has passed a stimulus of up to \$1,200 per adult and \$500 per eligible dependent. When the money will arrive varies by officials. Some say two weeks, other say it could take up to two months.

Local events have been canceled and they include the Easter Egg Hunt, the Dueling Piano Baseball Fundraiser, Firemen's Fun Night and the Spring City-wide rummage sales.

Since last Wednesday, the number of positive cases in South Dakota increased from 41 to 108. There are 12 who are hospitalized and 44 who have recovered. There were 3,609 negative tests.

Last week across the United States, 1,046 people have died from the COVID-19 virus. A week later, it has risen to 3,873.

The only known cure for the COVID-19 is to stay home. There is no magical cure for the virus. It will be your body's defenses against the virus.

There have been three positive cases in Brown County and one in Marshall County. The two leading counties in the state are Minnehaha County with 31 and Beadle County with 20.

South Dakota schools will be out until May 1st. But the peak of the virus is suppose to hit around May 8th before it starts its decline that will last into late June. Over 200 people could die from the virus in South Dakota.

The Life of Richard E. Helmer

December 16, 1926 - March 26, 2020

Husband of Norma Helmer

"In life, we loved you dearly, in death we love you still. In our hearts you hold a place, no one else will ever fill."

Richard E. Helmer of Groton, SD, age 93, passed away peacefully on Thursday, March 26, 2020 at Strand Kjorsvig Living Center in Roslyn, SD. Family members have decided that due to COVID-19, no services will be held at this time. His family has gathered to pray and share memories. A celebration of life will be held at a later date.

Richard Ellwin Helmer was born on December 16, 1926, to Henry and Mable (Wilmsen) Helmer in Andover, SD. He attended Andover High School, graduating in 1944. He was then drafted into the US Army. He was stationed in the Philippines and the 20th Air Force Base in Guam as a Motor Pool Sgt. Richard received the Asiatic Pacific Service Medal and the Victory Medal. With pride, when asked what his favorite service memory was, Richard said, "My captain said, 'Helmer, sew up that Japanese prisoner's head!', and I DID!" For 74 years, he was a member of the American Legion, Post 258. Richard returned to the Andover area and began his farming career.



On September 20, 1953, Richard was united in marriage to LaVonne Jones at Langford, SD. They lived in Andover for a short time, and then purchased their farm in 1955. To this union, four children, Deborah, Rich, Pamela, and Cheryl were born. Richard was a wonderful father to his four children when they were growing up.

On December 23, 1988, he married Norma Lemmon at Webster, SD. He farmed and worked at the Andover Garage (he was so proud to say that he never missed a single day of work) and retired at the age of 62. They made their home in Andover and later moved to Groton, SD in 2016.

Richard's survivors include his devoted wife, Norma Helmer; mother of loving stepchildren Bobbie (Steve) Talcott, Sioux Falls, SD; Deanna (Jeff) Spooner, Marysville, WA; Sandy (Ron) Hurst, Andover, SD; and Michael Lemmon (Laura Henry) Darrington, WA. Grandchildren include Ryan (Nichole) Talcott, Sioux Falls, SD; Jesse (Keri) Talcott, Sioux Falls, SD; Scott (Lyndsay) Talcott, Chaska, MN; Josh Spooner, (Miriam Ayoub) Seattle, WA; Tina (Jeremy) Urdahl, Watertown, SD; Mindy (Jacob) VanderVorst, Claremont, SD; Jeremiah Hurst, Andover, SD; Luke Lemmon, Molly Lemmon, Darrington, WA. He has many great grandchildren and neighborhood grandchildren.

Richard is also survived by his children, Deborah (Robert) Utecht, Naperville, IL; Rich (Dee) Helmer, Geneva, IL; Pamela (Bruce) Merkel, Andover, SD; and Cheryl Wold, Aberdeen, SD; his grandchildren; Eric Utecht, Brad (Claire) Utecht, Lanny (Becki) Merkel, Brett Merkel, Nicolas (Maggie) Helmer, Julia Wold, and Jordan Wold; and his great grandchildren Justin Merkel, Lillian Merkel, Mac Merkel, and Penelope Helmer.

He is survived by his brother Colonel Donald Helmer, San Antonio, TX and sister Joyce Skiles, Chattanooga, TN. He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers Leon, Orville, and Norman; sisters Dorothy, Beatrice, and Barbara; and one son-in-law, Daniel Wold.

Condolences may be directed to the family in care of Norma Helmer, 203 E. 2nd St., Groton, SD 57745. An online guestbook and obituary are available at www.pricefuneralchapel.net.

Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller

That glimmer continues to glimmer: third day in a row with sub-20% increases in cases. We now have 187,186 reported cases in 50 states, DC, and 4 territories, a 15% increase over yesterday. Maybe there's something here; I hope so, but will continue to watch for word from the professionals.

NY reports in today with 75,832 cases, only a 13% increase from yesterday, and NJ, whose rate of increase has been ridiculous, shows up with 18,696, a mere 12% increase. This is a one-day shift for NJ, so we're really not getting excited about that yet. Then we have CA with 8350, MI with 7630, FL with 6741, MA with 6620, IL with 5994, WA with 5292, LA with 5237, and PA with 4997. There are another 15 states reporting over 1000 cases, another 9 reporting over 500, and the remaining 15 + DC, PR, and GU all over 100. Only VI and MP remain below 100.

There have been 4047 deaths in 49 states + DC, PR, and GU. HI reported its first (actual) death today. Big numbers in NY - 1714, NJ - 267, MI - 264, LA - 240, and WA - 226. Remember when WA led the country for both cases and deaths? It's fallen to #8 in cases and #5 in deaths, both because they got on the social distancing bandwagon early and because other states started to catch up. Still, that is a good sign; if early adopting has that sort of effect, we can only hope later adopting shows similar results as we go along. We have 3 additional states reporting over 100 deaths, 8 additional states reporting over 50, and 17 additional states reporting over 10. 16 states + DC, PR, and GU are under 10.

None of this goes by hunches and feelings, but I feel less gloomy tonight anyhow. I hope that feeling is borne out by events over the next couple of weeks. Remains to be seen.

Yesterday, I promised some talk about vaccines. I'm going to one-up that and add a note at the end about treatment. So here goes.

The goal of vaccines is easier to understand if you remember back to our talk about the immune system. You will recall that the whole job of your immune system is to distinguish between what's yours and what's foreign, i.e., an invader. Then, having identified the invader, it sets out to destroy it. Things are a little bit more complicated than that, but these are the bare bones of the matter.

Now we talked a bit about the fact that a good solid immune response can take some time to develop and that, sometimes, a pathogen that's good at what it does (causing disease) can do a whole lot of damage before your immune system mounts a protective response. In most cases, though, it works great, which is why in normal times, you don't hear much about people dying of infectious diseases even though we live in a world absolutely crawling with bacteria and viruses and fungi. And the really good news is that your immune system has what's called memory; so once you've encountered a particular pathogen and responded to it, that memory means your response next time will be faster and bigger than the first one. It is that memory we're calling on and counting on when we use vaccines.

If we can deliberately expose you to a harmless version of a pathogen before you run into it in real life, then we give you time to produce a protective response—with memory—before the need arises so you will be protected in the future when you do see it in real life. The vaccines being explored for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, sort into different types:

(1) Protein-based: These contain a single virus component from the viral surface. The target seems to be that "spike" protein you might have read about; the spikes are those poking-out thingies all over the surface of every picture you've ever seen of a coronavirus, and they're what binds to your cells so they can

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infect you. We have a leg up here because we already know how to produce proteins for other viruses, but it tends to be a slow process. First you have to culture mammalian cells (in what's called a tissue culture) and then grow the virus in those until you have enough to purify out the protein you want and then design a vaccine around it. We've figured out how to speed up this production process using recombinant gene technology: We incorporate the gene for spike protein into the DNA of a bacterium and let the bacteria make the protein for us. This is faster because bacteria reproduce faster than mammalian cells, and it's safer because we don't have to grow so much of the actual virus—which is clearly dangerous to handle. Two companies are working on spike protein vaccine development right now.

(2) Gene-based: Here, we introduce the viral genetic material for that spike protein into your cells so they'll make the protein (just as they would for an infecting virus if you had the disease, only without the damage). This protein is then identified by your immune system and attacked, building an immune response and (we hope) lasting immunity. Some of these are DNA-based, and the challenge here is getting the DNA into your cell's nucleus so it will be "read" and used to produce the protein. It's hard to get cells to produce enough protein to trigger a good strong response, so that's the challenge here. There is currently a candidate for a Zika vaccine and one candidate for Covid-19 that use this technology. I don't believe there any approved vaccines of this type on the market at present; this is pretty new technology.

You can also introduce RNA into your cells instead of DNA. This is "read" faster and tends to give a stronger response, but RNA breaks down faster in your cells too, so it doesn't last as long or stimulate a response as long either. This is the kind of vaccine for which a clinical trial is now underway in the US.

There's also some work being done using "friendly viruses," harmless viruses that are good at getting things into your cells (which, after all, is the entire thrust of a virus's existence) to introduce these nucleic acids into the cells for us. This is a slower approach too, but there's a vaccine of this type in trials in China right now.

So there are lots of vaccines underway in various places all over the world. This might look scattershot and haphazard to you, but if you understand that any candidate, no matter how promising it looks on the drawing board—or even in early clinical trials—might go down in flames during testing, then having a lot of parallel efforts going on can be seen as a good thing. Maybe a vaccine causes terrible side effects, or maybe it breaks down too fast in your body so you don't get a good stimulus to mount a response. Maybe one vaccine won't work so well in the elderly (who, you will remember, have immune systems that aren't so responsive anymore) or doesn't produce lasting immunity or gives people allergic responses or has a component that turns out to be harmful. And maybe people just don't respond to it all that well. I'm going to guess the first vaccine or two (or three) we see will not be perfect, more like good enough. And we'll use them while better ones continue in the pipeline. This is not at all unusual in the world of vaccine development. We'll see how this plays out.

Remember that first-stage human trials (after the usual, but sort of skipped-past this time, preliminary animal trials for safety and effectiveness) are done in only a few dozen volunteers for safety, dose, and side effects. Those have to be complete before you can move to second-stage trials in several hundred people; can't give it to hundreds of people until you know how it will affect them. Now you're looking more specifically for biological effects—how the vaccine causes the response, but you're still very interested in adverse effects. And then, if that goes well, there are third-stage trials in several thousand individuals. Here we're looking to confirm that the immune response is solid over a wide variety of individuals, and we are still very interested in spotting that unlikely complication. The more people who receive a vaccine, the more likely you are to turn up some rare complication you wouldn't necessarily spot in small trials. At any stage of the process, the vaccine might have to be withdrawn and go back to the design process—or even be discarded entirely. And it won't be until all of these trials are complete that a vaccine will be certified

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and go into production at scale, and that's going to take some time too.

And this is why we're not going to have a vaccine for a year, soonest, and that's if everything goes swimmingly with this first vaccine. If the first candidates fizzle, then it will be longer, maybe much longer. If you're going to inject a substance into the bodies of millions of healthy people, you must be sure it's not going to cause widespread harm. You need to make sure it has the desired effect, that it is protective against the infection. And that takes time.

Things are somewhat different when you're talking about a person who's already sick. If someone's critically ill and may not survive, then you're going to be willing to take more chances—not to be reckless or thoughtless, but to be more aggressive in trying something new. I'm guessing that's why the FDA has decided to issue an emergency use authorization for an unproven and potentially harmful drug therapy in the sickest patients, starting immediately. This is that combination of hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin that we talked about a while back. There was a tiny study in France which looked promising, but no way included enough subjects to serve as the foundation for this sort of decision; however now, results from a somewhat larger (but still very small) study from the same team in France show similarly promising results.

A great many medical authorities are concerned about this authorization, citing the "limited" evidence of efficacy and the paucity of larger, more rigorous trials to establish efficacy and safety. Because each of these drugs is known to have serious adverse effects on heart rhythms, putting some 10% of the population at risk and 1% at high risk for sudden cardiac death, it would be good—really good—to have a larger, carefully controlled study before going around giving them in combination to sick people whose hearts might already be facing some challenges; but given the dearth of therapeutic options and the outcomes of serious cases of Covid-19, I'm guessing the FDA's risk-benefit calculus shifted toward taking a shot. The FDA statement did not provide much in the way of explanation for the decision, simply saying, "It is reasonable to believe [this therapy] may be effective," but citing no studies or evidence; so I sincerely hope it was not influenced by political calculation. That would be very dangerous, both for patients in the current situation and in society in the long haul: If science becomes a tool of politicians, we're all in danger from bad science. So now we'll see what happens. I hope this therapy is successful; even if it's moderately successful in some good share of cases, it could save many lives. So let's all sit around being cautiously optimistic together. And cheering on the vaccine folks too.

I'll leave you with the usual admonitions to stay home, use social distancing when you're out and about, exercise proper precautions, run a cleaner over frequently-touched surfaces, stop touching your face, and wash your hands. Don't believe every Internet meme and piece of garbage advice purporting to come from a real scientist unless you've confirmed it. Don't sit around feeling sorry for yourself. And if you do, find someone who needs your help and give it. If a genuine 21st-Century plague can't make us kinder and more compassionate toward our fellow travelers through this life, then we are lost, whether we survive this thing or not. The only change you can generate is within yourself; and trust me, like the rest of us, you have plenty in there that needs some attention. Go to it, and stay well.

We'll talk again.

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AREA COVID-19 CASES

	Mar. 20	Mar. 21	Mar. 22	Mar. 23	Mar. 24	Mar. 25	Mar. 26	Mar. 27	Mar. 28
Minnesota	115	137	169	235	262	287	346	398	441
Nebraska	27	42	50	52	61	68	81	89	108
Montana	15	27	34	45	51	65	90	121	147
Colorado	277	475	591	720	912	1,086	1,430	1,734	2,061
Wyoming	18	24	26	28	33	49	56	73	84
North Dakota	26	28	30	32	36	45	58	68	94
South Dakota	14	14	21	28	30	41	46	58	68
United States		15,219	33,276	43,963	54,812	69,147	85,996	104,837	124,686
US Deaths		201	417	560	780	1,046	1,300	1,711	2,191

Minnesota	115	+22	+32	+66	+27	+25	+59	+52	+43
Nebraska	27	+15	+8	+2	+9	+7	+13	+8	+19
Montana	15	+12	+7	+11	+6	+14	+25	+31	+26
Colorado	277	+198	+116	+129	+192	+174	+344	+303	+327
Wyoming	18	+6	+2	+2	+5	+16	+7	+17	+11
North Dakota	26	+2	+2	+2	+4	+9	+13	+10	+26
South Dakota	14	0	+7	+7	+2	+11	+7	+12	+10
United States		15,219	+18,057	+10,687	+10,849	+14,335	+16,849	+18,841	+19,849
US Deaths		201	+216	+143	+220	+266	+254	+411	+480

	Mar. 29	Mar. 30	Mar. 31
Minnesota	503	576	629
Nebraska	120	153	177
Montana	161	177	198
Colorado	2,307	2,627	2,966
Wyoming	87	95	120
North Dakota	98	109	126
South Dakota	90	101	108
United States	143,055	164,610	189,633
US Deaths	2,513	3,170	4,081

Minnesota	+62	+73	+53
Nebraska	+12	+33	+24
Montana	+14	+16	+20
Colorado	+246	+320	+339
Wyoming	+3	+8	+25
North Dakota	+4	+11	+17
South Dakota	+22	+11	+7
United States	+18,369	+21,555	+25,023
US Deaths	+322	+657	+911

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COVID-19 IN THE DAKOTAS

Seven new cases in South Dakota

44 recovered, 12 hospitalized

Lawrence County - +1

Lincoln County - +1

Minnehaha County - +3

Yankton County - +2

Ten more individuals recovered.

13 new cases in North Dakota

25 recovered, 20 hospitalized

Wyoming has now passed South Dakota with total number of cases.

Aurora	1
Beadle	20
Bon Homme	1
Brookings	1
Brown	3
Charles Mix	1
Clark	1
Clay	3
Codington	5
Davison	2
Deuel	1
Fall River	1
Faulk	1
Hamlin	1
Hughes	1
Hutchinson	2
Kingsbury	1
Lawrence	6
Lincoln	5
Lyman	1
Marshall	1
McCook	2
Meade	1
Minnehaha	31
Pennington	5
Roberts	1
Todd	1
Turner	1
Union	1
Yankton	6

Be
Broo
Brow
Hug
Linc
Min
Rob
Yank

Tota
Posi
Rec
Hosp
Deat
Neg

SOUTH DAKOTA CASE COUNTS	
Test Results	# of Cases
Positive*	108
Negative**	3609
Pending***	0

COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA	
Number of Cases	108
Hospitalized	12
Deaths	1
Recovered	44

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES	
Sex	# of Cases
Male	56
Female	52

0 to 19 years	5
20 to 29 years	21
30 to 39 years	13
40 to 49 years	20
50 to 59 years	24
60 to 69 years	17
70 to 79 years	7
80+ years	1

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Winter Weather Advisory URGENT - WINTER WEATHER MESSAGE National Weather Service Aberdeen SD 400 AM CDT Wed Apr 1 2020

Corson-Campbell-McPherson-Brown-Walworth-Edmunds-Dewey-Potter-Faulk-Spink-Stanley-Sully-Hughes-Hyde-Hand-Jones-Lyman-Buffalo-

Including the cities of McIntosh, Herreid, Eureka, Aberdeen, Mobridge, Ipswich, Isabel, Gettysburg, Faulkton, Redfield, Fort Pierre, Onida, Pierre, Highmore, Miller, Murdo, Kennebec, and Fort Thompson

...WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY IN EFFECT FROM 11 PM CDT /10 PM MDT/
THIS EVENING TO 7 AM CDT /6 AM MDT/ FRIDAY...

- * WHAT...Mixed precipitation expected. Total snow accumulations of 2 to 6 inches and ice accumulations of around one tenth of an inch.
- * WHERE...Portions of central, north central and northeast South Dakota.
- * WHEN...From 11 PM CDT /10 PM MDT/ this evening to 7 AM CDT /6 AM MDT/ Friday.
- * IMPACTS...Plan on slippery road conditions. Patchy blowing snow could significantly reduce visibility. The hazardous conditions could impact the morning or evening commute.

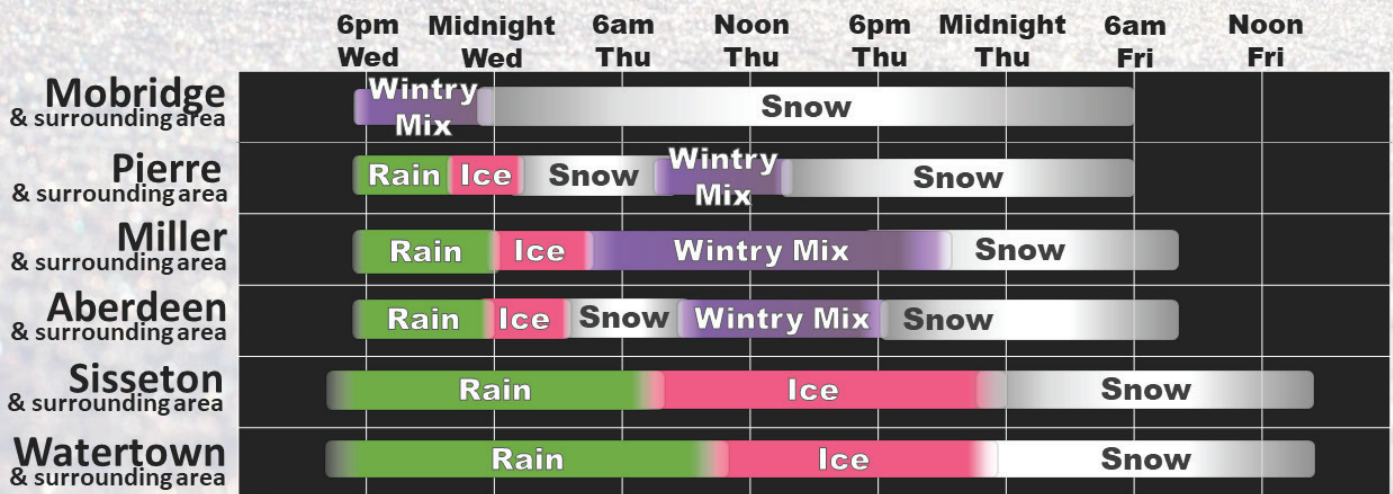
PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

Slow down and use caution while traveling.
The latest road conditions can be obtained by calling 5 1 1.



Winter Weather Threats Timeline

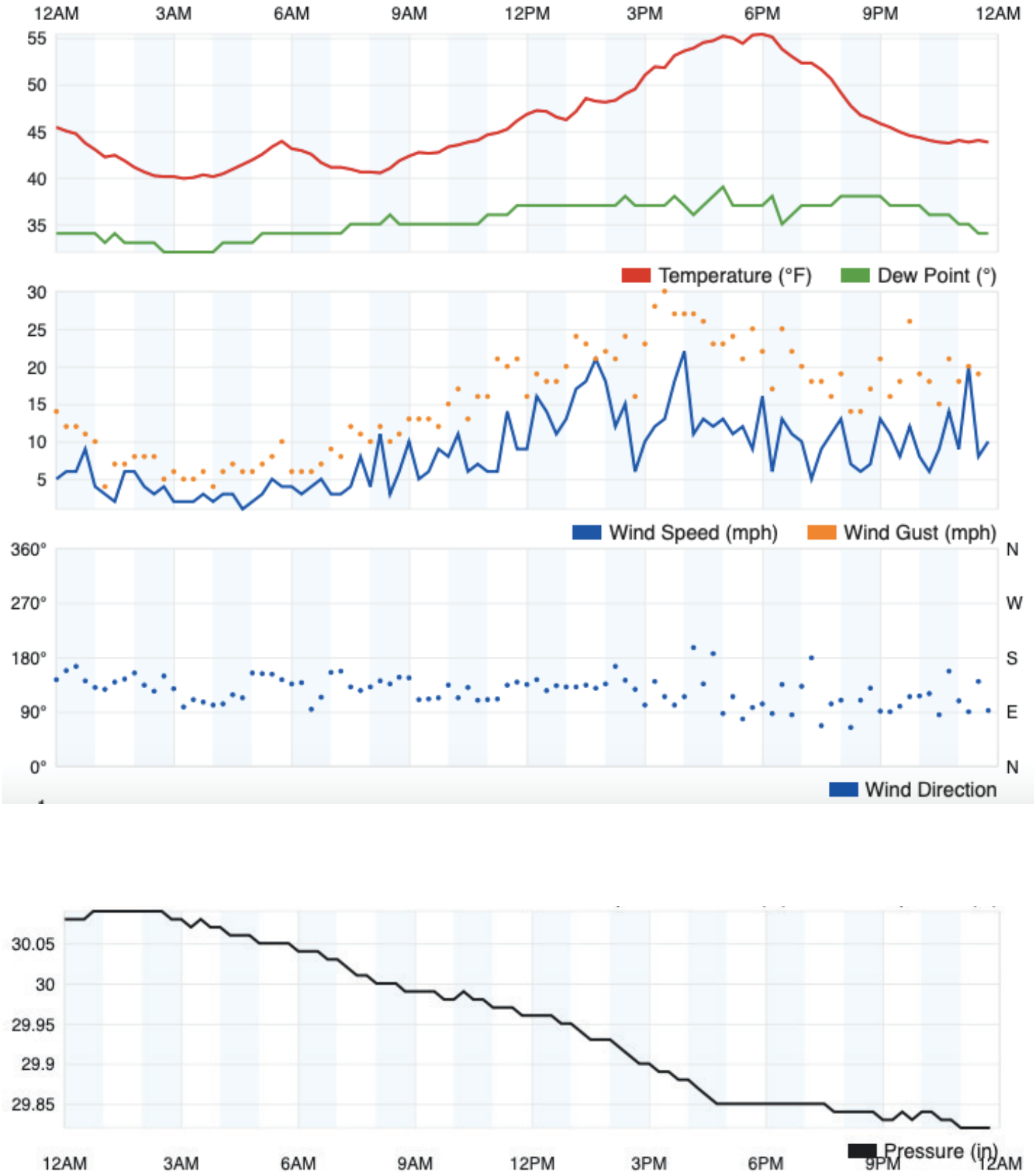
From Wednesday evening through Friday morning, the area will see a variety of wintry weather. In addition to what's shown below, isolated t-storms, fog, breezy winds with occasional blowing snow, is also possible at least for some. *Note, there may be lulls in the precipitation at times. Also, a good deal of uncertainty remains – watch for updates!



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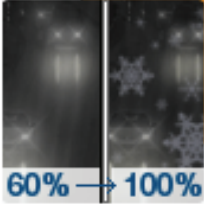



Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Winter Weather Advisory

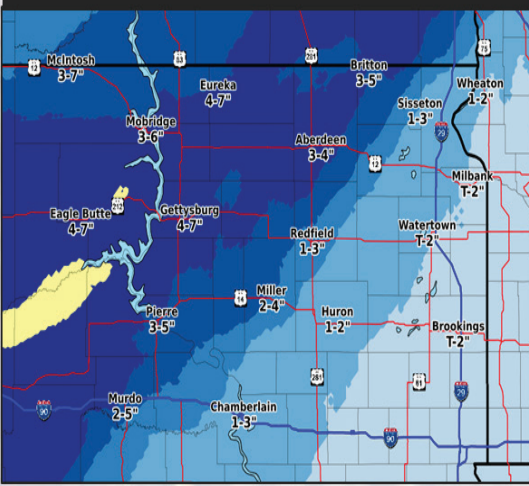
Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
				
30%	60% → 100%	90%	80% 80%	20%
Mostly Sunny then Chance Rain	Rain Likely then Rain/Snow	Wintry Mix and Patchy Blowing Snow	Wintry Mix and Patchy Blowing Snow then Snow	Slight Chance Snow
High: 63 °F	Low: 28 °F	High: 28 °F	Low: 22 °F	High: 31 °F



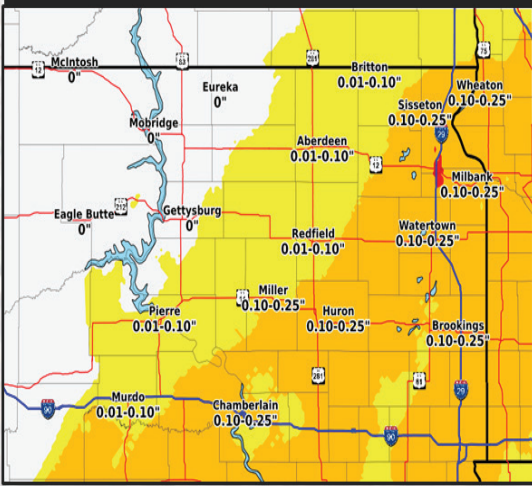
Wintry Weather Wed Night – Fri AM

A winter-like storm system will produce a combination of snow, ice and rain across the area. Impacts include **hazardous travel conditions due to slick roadways**. *Note, this is a complicated forecast, and a good deal of uncertainty remains. We can't rule out a band of 6+'' of snow across portions of central/north central SD, and 0.25+'' of ice across portions of the Coteau. The whole area will see ~0.30'' to 1.0'' of total moisture and breezy winds.

Potential Storm Total SNOW Accumulation



Potential Storm Total ICE Accumulation



Visit www.weather.gov/abr for a detailed local forecast

Updated: 4/1/2020 4:52 AM CT



A winter storm system has the potential for accumulating snow and ice tonight through Friday morning - stay tuned to the latest forecast as uncertainty remains.

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Today in Weather History

April 1, 1960: Heavy snow of 4 to 10 inches fell in the eastern half of South Dakota. Some highways were closed mainly due to the difficulty of plowing the heavy, wet snow. Power and phone failures of short duration were caused by the snowfall in the Aberdeen area, which received 7.5 inches, setting the record for April 1st. Snow with high water content aggravated floods that were currently in progress on the James, Vermillion and Big Sioux Rivers.

April 1, 2011: Snowmelt flooding in March continued across much of central and northeast South Dakota as the rest of the snowpack melted into early April. Many roads along with many acres of crop and pastureland remained flooded. Roads, culverts, and bridges were damaged across the region. Several roads were washed out with many closed. Many homes were threatened with some surrounded by water. Rising lake levels in northeast South Dakota also threatened and flooded many homes. Many people had to use four-wheelers to get to their homes. A Presidential Disaster was declared for all counties due to the flooding damage. The total damage estimates, including March, were from 4.5 to 5 million dollars for the area. The flooding diminished across much of the area into May. The snowmelt flooding damaged many roads and highways, including U.S. Highway 81, throughout Hamlin County. Many roads were closed throughout the county. In the late evening of April 13th on U.S Highway 81, a car with four people inside went through a flooded area at a high rate of speed and ended up in the flooded ditch. They all got out with no injuries. The snowmelt runoff caused Lake Kampeska to rise to nearly 44 inches overfull. The lake flooded several roads and also threatened many homes. Sandbagging was done to hold off the rising lake. Waves and ice chunks did eventually do some damage to homes. Also, many boat lifts were damaged. Mud Creek near Rauville also went slightly above the flood stage of 9 feet to 9.64 feet for a couple of days in early April.

1875: The London Times published the first daily newspaper weather map. The first American newspaper weather map would be issued on 5/12/1876 in the New York Herald. Weather maps would first appear on a regular basis beginning on 5/9/1879 in the New York Daily Graphic.

1960: The first weather satellite, TIROS 1 (Television and Infra-Red Observation Satellite) began sending pictures back to Earth. The TIROS series would have little benefit to operational weather forecasters because the image quality was low and inconsistent. The most critical understanding achieved from the new technology was the discovery of the high degree of organization of large-scale weather systems, a fact never apparent from ground and aircraft observations.

1973: A tornado touches down near Brentsville, Virginia, then traveled to Fairfax hitting Woodson High School. This F2 tornado injured 37 and caused \$14 million in damage.

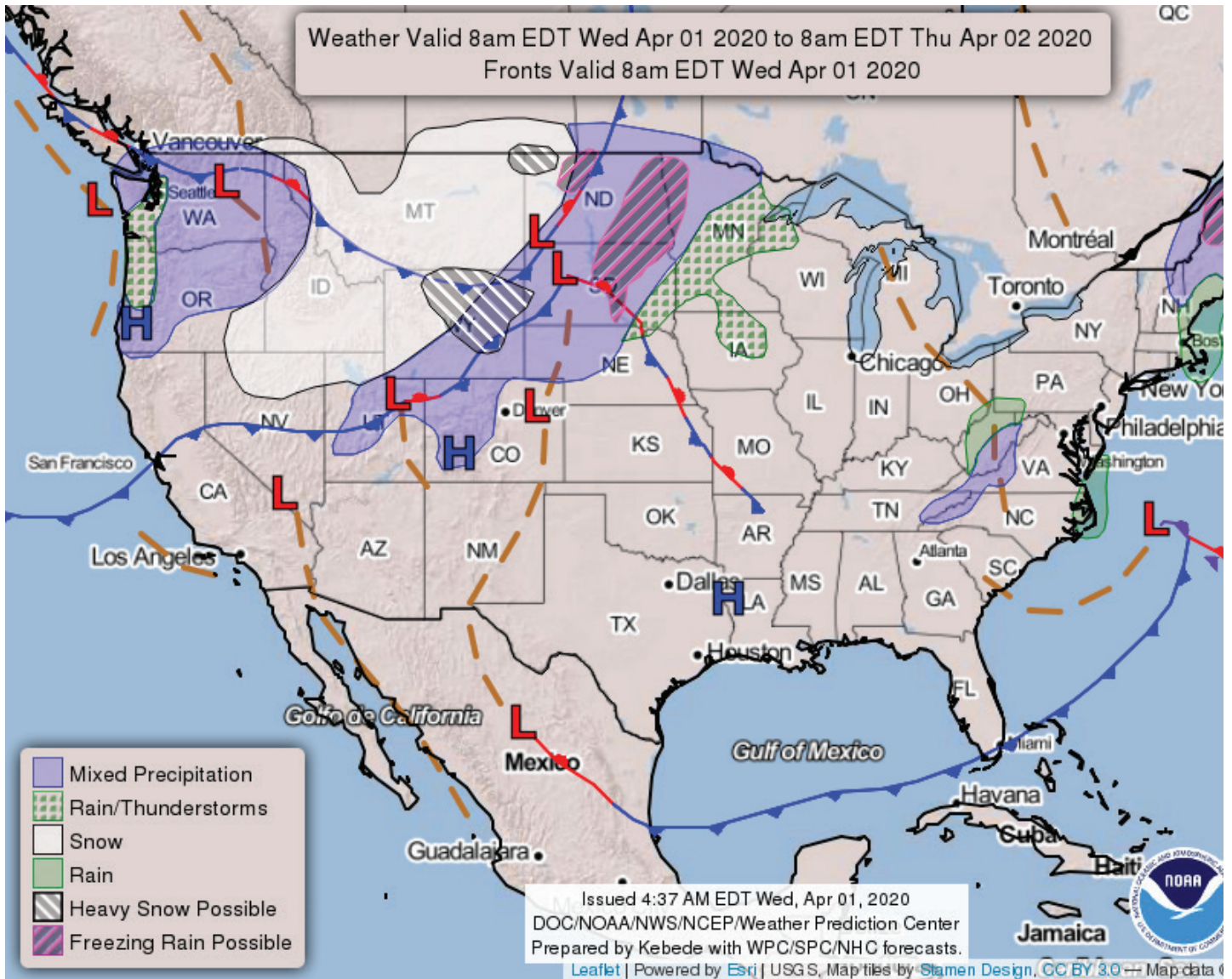
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 56 °F at 5:02 PM
Low Temp: 40 °F at 3:21 AM
Wind: 30 mph at 3:23 PM
Snow

Record High: 80° in 1928
Record Low: 0° in 1899
Average High: 49°F
Average Low: 26°F
Average Precip in March.: 1.16
Precip to date in March.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 2.18
Precip Year to Date: 0.35
Sunset Tonight: 8:03 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:11 a.m.



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REACHING OUT - REACHING UP

It was a bitterly cold Sunday morning. People were walking as fast as they could from the parking lot to the steps that led into the sanctuary. Standing next to the entrance was a poorly dressed man with his hat pulled down over his eyes and his collar held tightly around his neck as he tried to keep warm. His clothes were shabby and his shoes well worn. He appeared destitute, hopeless, and to those entering the church, unimportant. No one stopped to offer help.

The church members filled the pews, the choir took their seats, and the organist started the prelude. As the people sat waiting for the service to begin, they suddenly let out a gasp as they saw "that man" who was outside the church walk down the aisle, stand behind the pulpit, and remove his tattered clothes, and stand silently. It was their pastor.

Opening his Bible he read, "I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me."

Every day God places opportunities to serve Him before us and around us. These opportunities do not require wealth or skills, intelligence or power. They simply require eyes that are open, a mind that is alert, and a heart that is sensitive to the needs of others.

Opportunities create obligations. To refuse to help others is to refuse to help God.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to see what You see, to feel what You feel, and then do what You would have us to do when we see others who need help. Open our hearts! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Matthew 25:42-46 And he will answer, "I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me."

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2020 Groton SD Community Events

- **CANCELLED** Groton Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt - City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
 - **CANCELLED** Dueling Piano's Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion
 - **CANCELLED** Fireman's Fun Night (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
 - 04/25-26/2020 Front Porch 605 Rural Route Road Trip
 - 04/26/2020 Father/Daughter dance.
 - **CANCELLED** Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales, (1st Saturday in May)
 - 05/11/2020 Girls High School Golf Meet at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 05/25/2020 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services
 - 06/05/2020 Athletic Fundraiser at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 06/8-10/2020 St. John's VBS
 - 06/19/2020 SDSU Golf at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 06/20/2020 Shriner's Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 06/22/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Ladies Invitational
 - 06/26/2020 Groton Businesses Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 07/04/2020 Firecracker Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 07/12/2020 Summer Fest/Car Show
 - 07/16/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Pro Am Golf Tourney
 - 07/31-08/04/2020 State American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
 - 08/07/2020 Wine on Nine Event at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 09/12/2020 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Sat. after Labor Day)
 - 09/13/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Couples Sunflower Classic
 - 10/09/2020 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
 - 10/10/2020 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
 - 10/31/2020 Downtown Trick or Treat
 - 10/31/2020 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat
 - 11/14/2020 Groton Legion Annual Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
 - 11/26/2020 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center
 - 12/05/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
 - 12/05/2020 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services
 - 01/--/2021 83rd Annual Carnival of Silver Skates
-
- Bingo every Wednesday 6:30pm at the American Legion Post #39
 - Groton Lions Club Wheel of Meat, American Legion Post #39 7pm (Saturday nights November 30th thru April 11th)
 - Groton Lions Club Wheel of Pizza, Jungle Lanes 8pm (Saturday nights November 30th thru April 11th)
-
- All dates are subject to change, check for updates here
 - Jun 2020 Transit Fundraiser (Thursday Mid-June)

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Tuesday:

Mega Millions

08-17-51-57-70, Mega Ball: 2, Megaplier: 4

(eight, seventeen, fifty-one, fifty-seven, seventy; Mega Ball: two; Megaplier: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$113 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$170 million

Disputed Canada-US oil pipeline work to start in April

By MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — A Canadian company said Tuesday it plans to start construction of the disputed Keystone XL oil sands pipeline through the U.S. Midwest in April, after lining up customers and money for a proposal that is bitterly opposed by environmentalists and some American Indian tribes.

Construction would begin at the pipeline's border crossing in Montana, said TC Energy spokesman Terry Cunha. That would be a milestone for a project first proposed in 2008.

The announcement came after the company secured \$1.1 billion in financing from the Canadian provincial government of Alberta to cover construction through 2020 and agreements for the transport of 575,000 barrels of oil daily.

Despite plunging oil prices in recent weeks, Alberta Premier Jason Kenney said the province's resource-dependent economy could not afford for Keystone XL to be delayed until after the coronavirus pandemic and a global economic downturn have passed.

"This investment in Keystone XL is a bold move to retake control of our province's economic destiny and put it firmly back in the hands of the owners of our natural resources, the people of Alberta," Kenney said.

A spokeswoman for Montana Gov. Steve Bullock said he had been in contact with Kenney to raise concerns over an estimated 100 workers coming into the state for the line's construction. Bullock said that could further strain rural health systems facing the coronavirus.

"TC Energy holds a tremendous responsibility to appropriately manage or eliminate this risk and we will continue to monitor the plans for that response," Bullock spokeswoman Marissa Perry said.

There was only one confirmed infection as of Friday from eastern Montana counties along the line's route, but the virus has been spreading in rural areas in recent days.

Company representatives said they would follow the guidance of government and health authorities to determine the best way to keep construction crews and the public safe.

The pipeline was rejected twice by the administration of President Barack Obama over worries it could make climate change worse. President Donald Trump has been a strong proponent of the \$8 billion project and issued it a permit that environmentalists say was illegal.

A court hearing in the permit dispute is set for April 16 before U.S. District Judge Brian Morris in Great Falls. Morris has previously ruled against the project.

The company has previously said it also plans in April to begin work on camps where pipeline construction workers would live in Fallon County, Montana and Haakon County, South Dakota.

The company said the 1,200-mile (1,930-kilometer) pipeline would start sending oil to the U.S. in 2023. It's designed to move up to 830,000 barrels (35 million gallons) of crude daily at from the oil sand fields of western Canada to Steele City, Nebraska, where it would connect to other pipelines that feed oil refineries on the U.S. Gulf Coast.

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Opponents in January asked Morris to block any work. They said clearing and tree felling along the route would destroy bird and wildlife habitat. Native American tribes along the pipeline route have said that the pipeline could break and spill oil into waterways like Montana's Missouri River.

The judge in December had initially denied a request from environmentalists to block construction because no work was immediately planned.

TC Energy filed reports with court in recent weeks declaring its intentions to start work.

"At this time, we are continuing with our planned activities and will adjust if it becomes necessary," Cunha said.

The remaining \$6.9 billion in construction costs is expected to be funded through a \$4.2 billion loan guaranteed by the Alberta government and a \$2.7 billion investment by TC Energy.

Once the project is complete, TC Energy expects to buy back the Alberta government's investment and refinance the \$4.2 billion loan.

"We thank U.S. President Donald Trump and Alberta Premier Jason Kenney as well as many government officials across North America for their advocacy without which, individually and collectively, this project could not have advanced," TC Energy chief executive Russ Girling said in a statement.

A representative of the Sierra Club said the decision to push forward with the project amid the coronavirus pandemic was "a shameful new low" for the company. Pipeline opponents contend workers could inadvertently spread the virus to rural areas with limited health care services.

"By barreling forward with construction during a global pandemic, TC Energy is putting already vulnerable communities at even greater risk," said the Sierra Club's Catherine Collentine. "We will continue to fight to ensure this dangerous pipeline is never completed."

Opposition to another pipeline built through the region several years ago, the Dakota Access Pipeline, culminated in months of protests, sometimes violent, near the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation that straddles the North Dakota-South Dakota state line.

Lawmakers in some states have sought to curb the possibility of similar protests against Keystone XL.

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem successfully pushed a legislative measure to revive the state's criminal and civil penalties for rioting and inciting a riot, drawing demonstrations from groups opposed to the pipeline. The law she signed last week enacts criminal and civil penalties for people who "urge" force or violence.

Noem said she spoke with TC Energy on Monday and did not expect construction to begin in South Dakota until the summer.

Another oil pipeline in TC Energy's Keystone network in October spilled an estimated 383,000 gallons (1.4 million liters) of oil in eastern North Dakota.

Critics have said a damaging spill from Keystone XL is inevitable given the length of the line and the many rivers and other waterways it would cross beneath.

Associated Press writers Stephen Groves contributed from Sioux Falls, South Dakota and Rob Gillies from Toronto.

Follow Matthew Brown at <https://twitter.com/matthewbrownap>

The Latest: Noem signs bills to address COVID-19 outbreak

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The Latest on the coronavirus outbreak in South Dakota (all times local): 5:30 p.m.

Gov. Krist Noem on Tuesday signed nine emergency bills passed by the South Dakota Legislature to address the outbreak of the coronavirus.

Lawmakers passed the bills just hours before Noem's signing. They met in a marathon session that stretched from Monday into Tuesday, voting remotely through a conference call system.

The measures make a slew of changes like postponing local elections from mid-April until June, waiving state requirements on schools due to the coronavirus, and adjusting the state budget to distribute \$93

million in federal aid.

All the legislation goes into effect immediately, but is also temporary, expiring at various points this year.

4:30 p.m.

A Sioux Falls elderly care facility announced on Tuesday two of its residents have tested positive for COVID-19.

Staff at the Prince of Peace Retirement Community, operated by Avera Health, isolated two residents when they started showing symptoms of the coronavirus. Avera said in a statement the residents don't need to be hospitalized.

The facility had closed to visitors the last two weeks, leading Avera to suspect the residents were infected through an employee. Avera said it screens employees and residents daily for symptoms.

8:15 a.m.

Sanford is currently identifying patients and others who may have had contact with a physician at its Watertown clinic who has tested positive for the coronavirus.

Dr. William Devine isolated himself at home as soon as he developed symptoms, according to the health care system. It's believed his exposure to patients was limited.

Those who were seen by Devine on or after March 25 will be contacted by the South Dakota Department of Health.

The Argus Leader says Sanford is also encouraging patients who have had recent contact with Devine to monitor themselves closely and call the Watertown clinic or schedule an e-visit if they have COVID-19 symptoms.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, and death.

Noem: Guidance will stand after lawmakers reject new powers

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem said Tuesday that she'll continue her current guidance for business restrictions after lawmakers rejected her request to let the state health secretary impose mandatory measures.

Lawmakers met into the early-morning hours Tuesday and approved several measures, including postponing local elections from mid-April until June, and waiving state requirements on schools due to the coronavirus.

But they declined the Republican governor's request that the state health secretary and county officials be granted the power to close businesses. Several lawmakers said it should be the governor who orders such closures in an emergency.

When Noem was asked afterward whether she would issue stay-at-home orders or close businesses if necessary, she said instead she would stick to her executive order recommending that businesses limit gatherings to 10 people or fewer.

Noem has faced criticism from the state's largest group of doctors for not doing more, but she has said it's not clear in state law that she has the power.

The governor has encouraged cities to enforce business restrictions as they see fit. That has made vocal critics of the mayors of South Dakota's largest cities. Sioux Falls Mayor Paul TenHaken told lawmakers that mayors have been "hamstrung" by the lack of a statewide mandate.

Legislators dialed in remotely to the marathon session Monday and Tuesday, and the deteriorating condition of one of their colleagues underscored the gravity of the crisis. Rep. Bob Glanzer, a Huron Republican, was hospitalized Monday in critical condition with the virus.

Several bills passed unanimously, while conservative lawmakers amended several others to limit the

powers they gave the governor during the crisis, including making sure that she can't halt gun purchases or delay the June 2 primary election any further if she deemed it necessary.

Health officials said the state has 108 confirmed cases of COVID-19, more than doubling the number of cases since Thursday. So far, 44 people in South Dakota have recovered; one has died.

Noem said the state has received supplies for a new test that can identify COVID-19 in minutes.

An elder care facility operated by one of the largest health care providers in the state has uncovered some cases. Avera Health said two residents at its Prince of Peace Retirement Community are in isolation after testing positive. Separately, Sanford Health said a doctor at its Watertown clinic has the virus.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. Older adults and people with existing health problems are among those particularly susceptible to more severe illness, including pneumonia.

Follow AP coverage of the virus outbreak at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

Corps: Some levees damaged in 2019 still vulnerable

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

O'FALLON, Mo. (AP) — With flood concerns already high in the Midwest, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is warning that many levees on the Missouri and Kansas rivers that were damaged during devastating floods last spring remain vulnerable to high water.

The National Weather Service has said Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas and Missouri and eastern North Dakota and South Dakota face an above-average flood risk this spring, due largely to soil saturation to the north. Already, some rivers are high, including the Mississippi, which on Tuesday was a few feet above flood stage in several towns in Iowa, Illinois and Missouri. No major damage was reported.

A bigger concern is in parts of eastern Kansas and western Missouri. Record flooding in 2019 damaged several Missouri River and Kansas River levees, many of which have yet to be repaired. The Kansas City District of the Corps of Engineers said in a news release that "challenging weather conditions and higher flows" persisted through the winter and continue, delaying the ability to fully assess damaged levee systems.

The Corps said projects at 13 sites are preparing to begin work, and more than 20 additional bid openings or contract awards are expected by the end of April. More than two dozen other repair projects in the Kansas City district, though, aren't ready for bids. The district covers parts of western Missouri, north-eastern Kansas, southern Nebraska and southwestern Iowa.

For now, both the Kansas River and the Missouri River are below flood stage.

Some key projects have been completed. In February, crews closed the final breach of a Missouri River levee in northwestern Missouri near Rock Port. It was one of several breaks along the levee section that saw thousands of acres of mostly farmland submerged and a section of Interstate 29 and other roads in Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas damaged and closed to traffic for weeks.

Hospital closures complicate coronavirus care in rural areas

By JAY REEVES Associated Press

CARROLLTON, Ala. (AP) — As the coronavirus spread across the United States, workers at the lone hospital in one Alabama county turned off beeping monitors for good and padlocked the doors, making it one of the latest in a string of nearly 200 rural hospitals to close nationwide.

Now Joe Cunningham is more worried than ever about getting care for his wife, Polly, a dialysis patient whose health is fragile. The nearest hospital is about 30 miles away, he said, and that's too far since COVID-19 already has been confirmed in sparsely populated Pickens County, on the Mississippi state line.

Cunningham is trusting God, but he's also worried the virus will worsen in his community, endangering his wife without a hospital nearby.

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"It can still find its way here," said Cunningham, 73.

The pandemic erupted at an awful time for communities trying to fill health care gaps following the closure of 170 rural hospitals across the nation in the last 15 years. 2019 was the worst year yet, with 19 closures, and eight more have shut down since Jan. 1, according to the Sheps Center for Health Services Research at the University of North Carolina.

While the nation's coronavirus hot spots so far have been big cities like New York and New Orleans, officials fear inadequate testing and the lack of medical resources linked to hospital failures will catch up with smaller population centers.

The reasons for the closures vary, but experts and administrators cite factors including declining rural populations, rising medical costs, insufficient Medicare reimbursements, large numbers of uninsured patients, state decisions against Medicaid expansion and mismanagement. About 60% of the counties and towns that have lost hospitals are in the South, an analysis by the Sheps Center showed.

Other communities are trying to keep hundreds of endangered hospitals afloat as resources are stretched thinner than ever and moneymaking services like elective surgeries are curtailed during the outbreak.

"It's a scary time to be thinking about losing a hospital when you've got a pandemic going on," said Scott Graham, chief executive officer of Three Rivers and North Valley Hospitals in central Washington. The hospitals serve about 26,000 people in a wide-open area that Graham describes as so remote it's more frontier than rural.

In North Conway, New Hampshire, a physician at the 25-bed Memorial Hospital already is among the county's seven confirmed cases of coronavirus, said CEO Art Mathisen. The hospital is preparing for the worst as it tries to triple the number of beds and spends upward of \$100,000 on rooms with air flow aimed at limiting the spread of contagions, he said.

About 15% of the U.S. population, or more than 46 million people, lives in rural areas, according to the Census Bureau. They are more likely than urban dwellers to die from chronic respiratory illnesses, heart disease and other problems that put people more at risk for COVID-19, the illness caused by the virus, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, and death.

In West Virginia, where no city has a population of more than 50,000 and 20% of residents are senior citizens, frustration has mounted over two recent hospital closings that forced patients to seek help farther away, and a third hospital that filed for bankruptcy in October announced Monday it was shutting down in April. There has been talk but no immediate action to open new facilities to deal with coronavirus cases in one of the unhealthiest states.

"We certainly need our local hospital. We need the beds. We need the equipment, and we need it locally," said Michael Angelucci, a state lawmaker who operates an ambulance service in rural Fairmont, West Virginia, where a hospital closed this month.

The pandemic could actually hasten more rural hospital closures, said Michael Topchik of the Maine-based Charter Center for Rural Health. He co-authored a study released in February that found about 450 rural hospitals were vulnerable to shutting down.

Most rural hospitals make money on emergency room care and elective procedures, which are on hold as health care workers try to ration masks and other protective gear in anticipation of COVID-19 infections, he said.

"Our study predicts the worse is yet to come if something's not done to stabilize the safety net," he said.

In northern Missouri, Sullivan County Memorial Hospital's chief executive, Tony Keene, said that on top of the recent drop in revenue linked to reduced services, he has been pumping money into preparation for a possible outbreak in the rural area by the Iowa border where the hospital is.

"We need an infusion of cash, like now," Keene said. "If we go a couple more weeks, we are going to have to make very serious decisions on whether we pay our vendors or pay our people."

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The \$2.2 trillion coronavirus package approved by Congress last week includes \$100 billion for hospitals, but it's unclear how much of that will go toward rural health care centers.

As Pickens County Medical Center prepared to close on March 6, Mayor Mickey Walker organized a protest outside the public hospital that drew around 70 people — a big crowd in a town of only 950 people. The facility shut down anyway.

A building beside the shuttered, tan-brick hospital houses medical offices, including the dialysis clinic that treats Joe Cunningham's wife, but Walker said that's not enough. The old folks Walker talks to through church are getting more worried by the day about the new virus.

"Everybody's just real panicky," Walker said. "We have all this virus stuff going on, and we don't have a hospital to go to."

Associated Press writers Summer Ballentine in Jefferson City, Missouri; John Raby in Charleston, West Virginia; Michael Casey in Concord, New Hampshire; Kim Chandler in Montgomery, Alabama; Amy Forliti in Minneapolis; and Gillian Flaccus in Portland, Oregon, contributed to this report.

Follow AP coverage of the virus outbreak at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

The Latest: Japan bans entry from 73 other countries

By The Associated Press undefined

The Latest on the coronavirus pandemic. The new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness or death.

TOP OF THE HOUR:

- Japan adds 49 countries to list of countries barred from entering.
- Scottish government discusses alternatives to temporarily ending jury trials during lockdown.
- Former Marseille president Pape Diouf dies at 68.
- Europe rushes to build field hospitals amid ICU bed crunch.

TOKYO — Japan's Prime Minister says Japan has banned entry from 49 more countries, including the U.S., Canada, all of China, South Korea and seven Southeast Asian countries.

That brings the total number of countries banned from entering Japan to 73.

Shinzo Abe says the government has tightened visa restrictions and will require a two-week quarantine to visitors and returnees from places Japan has designated as eligible for non-essential trips.

Abe cited views presented by a panel of experts at a meeting earlier Wednesday that new cases are rapidly on the rise in Japan and that its medical system is increasingly under pressure. He has faced calls for a declaration of a state of emergency, but his government is assessing the situation due to concerns of an economic impact.

Tokyo reported 65 new cases Wednesday, after reporting a record 78 daily new cases Tuesday. Nationwide, Japan has about 3,000 cases including 712 from a cruise ship, with 78 deaths.

BRUSSELS — The European Commission will propose a plan supporting short-time work across the continent in a move aimed at helping businesses and workers weather the economic shock of the new coronavirus.

European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen said the bloc's executive arm will unveil the new tool dubbed "Sure" — an initiative she said will be supported by the EU's 27 member states and will help the countries affected by the crisis.

Von der Leyen said the plan will mitigate the effects of the economic downturn by helping workers keep their jobs. She says companies should not lay off workers, even if duties have decreased because of the

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coronavirus.

Von der Leyen said the plan will also help the economy restart "without delay" once lockdown measures will be lifted across the continent.

ATHENS — Greece's main opposition party has urged the government to protect refugees and migrants at the country's largest camp from the spread of the new coronavirus.

Some 22,000 people are currently at the camp at Moria on the island of Lesbos. Most live in crowded tents outside the grounds.

The letter to the Health Ministry was signed by nine parliament members from the left-wing Syriza party. It follows similar warnings from human rights groups and public health campaigners.

The government has imposed movement restrictions at the camp and is creating isolation areas. Plans to re-house the migrants have been delayed by disputes between the government and local authorities over alternatives.

Severe conditions of overcrowding also exist at other Greek island camps. There have been no confirmed cases of coronavirus at any of the island refugee camps.

BERLIN — European researchers say it's possible to create apps for tracing contacts to curb the coronavirus outbreak without ditching cherished privacy standards.

A group of some 130 researchers from eight countries say they have devised a way to detect whether a smartphone was close to one belonging to someone who later tested positive for COVID-19.

Governments across the world are examining ways to use technology to track the spread of the virus and trace those who may have become infected. Human rights activists have warned of the dangers of mass smartphone surveillance.

The new project is dubbed Pan-European Privacy-Preserving Proximity Tracing. It is backed by dozens of universities like the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne and companies such as cellular provider Vodafone.

LONDON — The Scottish government has dropped controversial plans to temporarily bring an end to trial by jury during the coronavirus lockdown.

Constitution Secretary Mike Russell told Scottish lawmakers that the government was withdrawing the proposals from emergency legislation, and that "intensive and wide-ranging" discussions with interested parties, including victims, about alternatives will now take place. Other measures within the emergency legislation include the early release of prisoners and a ban on evictions.

Russell said new proposals over the justice system will be brought forward this month.

Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon had said that bringing a temporary end to jury trials was necessary so serious criminal trials did not halt entirely.

The proposals regarding trial by jury met with criticism across Scotland, which has a wide array of devolved powers from the U.K., particularly on legal matters.

The Scottish Criminal Bar Association said they included attacks on "principles that have been built over more than six hundred years and are the very cornerstone of not just Scotland's Criminal Justice System, but those of almost every advanced liberal democracy in the developed world."

TALLINN, Estonia — Estonian authorities say inmates at the Baltic country's penitentiaries have been ordered to produce protective face masks for themselves and prison employees as the two groups remain under high risk of getting the coronavirus.

Prisoners working for the state-owned AS Eesti Vanglatoostus production company are currently able to produce some 400 face masks a day, the region's main news agency Baltic News Service reported Wednesday.

Many of the hundreds of drug addicts and HIV-positive carriers in the nation of 1.3 million have been

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diagnosed with infectious diseases ahead of their imprisonment. That may have seriously weakened their immune system, and COVID-19 may pose a high risk to their lives, the news agency reported.

DAKAR, Senegal — Pape Diouf, a former president of French soccer club Marseille, has died in Senegal after contracting the coronavirus, the West African country's first COVID-19-related death. He was 68.

Senegalese health officials said Diouf died Tuesday. He had been treated since Saturday in intensive care at Fann Hospital in Dakar, said Abdoulaye Diouf Sarr, the minister of health.

Relatives say he was meant to be moved to France. He had recently traveled to several countries in the region, including Ivory Coast.

Senegal President Macky Sall offered condolences to Diouf's family in a message posted on Twitter.

MADRID — Spain reports a new record of 864 deaths in one day while total infections broke the 100,000 mark, making it the third country to surpass that milestone behind the United States and Italy.

Spanish health authorities said Wednesday that the total number of deaths reached 9,053 since the beginning of the outbreak.

Total infections hit 102,136. But the 24-hour increase of 7,719 was 1,500 fewer than the increase from the previous day, offering hope that the contagion rate is stabilizing.

Spain is two-and-a-half weeks into a national lockdown with stay-at-home rules for all workers except those in health care, food production and distribution, and other essential industries.

The country is frantically working to add to the number of intensive care units in hospitals which are quickly filling up in the country's hardest-hit regions.

Spanish authorities are bringing into the country 1,500 purchased ventilator machines and asking local manufacturers to ramp up production, with some creative solutions employed, such as snorkeling masks repurposed as breathing masks.

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka — Sri Lanka's president Gotabaya Rajapaksa is requesting that international financial organizations provide debt moratorium or debt deferment facilities to developing nations such as Sri Lanka, which are adversely affected due to the new coronavirus.

Rajapaksa made the request on Wednesday during a telephone discussion with the Director-General of the World Health Organization, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

Rajapaksa requested Ghebreyesus to speak with the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, president of the World Bank, president of the Asian Development Bank and leaders of the leading bilateral lending nations "to provide debt moratorium or debt re-profiling facilities for vulnerable developing countries like Sri Lanka whose economies depend on tourism, exports, remittances and foreign investment in debt and equity markets."

Ghebreyesus said on Twitter that he discussed with Rajapaksa the health and economic impacts COVID-19 can have on Sri Lanka and the whole region.

"I thanked him for mobilizing the whole-of-government in the fight against the coronavirus," he added.

Sri Lanka has imposed a curfew since March 20, locking down the whole country and banning non-essential travel. Police are strictly enforcing the law and have arrested thousands who have violated the curfew regulations.

Two people have so far died due to COVID-19 while there are 142 positive cases.

The coronavirus has dealt a severe blow to the country's lucrative tourism and garment industries.

LONDON — The British government is under fire for failing to keep its promise to increase the number of tests performed for COVID-19.

The U.K. has restricted testing to hospitalized patients, leaving many people with milder symptoms unsure whether they have had the new coronavirus. Many scientists have urged wider testing to allow medics who are negative to remain at work, and to better understand how the virus spreads.

That has happened in Germany, which has the capacity to do 500,000 tests a week.

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The U.K. initially performed about 5,000 tests a day, but the government promised to increase that number to 10,000 by the end of last week. The target has not been met, with just over 8,000 tests performed Monday, the last day for which figures are available.

Officials have blamed a shortage of the chemicals needed to perform the tests.

Communities secretary Robert Jenrick said Wednesday that the number of tests should hit 15,000 a day "within a couple of days" and rise to 25,000 a day by mid-April. He conceded, "We do need to go further and we need to do that faster."

He told ITV that "it isn't easy to procure the tests in a global pandemic because there is a great deal of demand."

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korean health officials say 43 patients have been placed under isolation in one of the biggest hospitals in the capital of Seoul after a hospitalized 9-year-old girl tested positive for the coronavirus.

Jeong Eun-kyeong, director of South Korea's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, on Wednesday said around 50 medical staff who worked at the Asan Medical Center's pediatric department will be quarantined at their homes although they tested negative.

Jeong and Seoul City officials say the girl was tested for the virus after doctors found she had previously been treated for a headache at another hospital in Euijeongbu, near Seoul, where a dozen patients and medical staff have been infected with COVID-19.

Officials didn't release specific details about the girl's conditions.

South Korea's nationwide caseload has slowed from early March when it reported around 500 new infections a day, but the country has struggled to stem infections at hospitals, psychiatric wards, nursing homes and other live-in facilities.

Hundreds of patients and medical staff have been infected in hospitals in the worst-hit city of Daegu, where more than 6,700 of the country's 9,887 infections have been reported.

PARIS — France is evacuating on Wednesday 36 patients infected with the coronavirus from the Paris region onboard two medicalized high-speed TGV trains.

The patients, all treated in intensive care units, are being transferred to several hospitals in Brittany, as western France is less impacted by the epidemic.

The operation aims at relieving hospitals in the Paris region, hardly hit by the coronavirus that has claimed more than 3,500 lives in France.

The country has already operated several transports of patients by train, helicopter, military aircraft and onboard a Navy ship. Some patients from eastern France have also been transferred to hospitals in neighboring Germany, Luxemburg and Switzerland.

France has increased its capacity of 5,000 ICU beds before the crisis to 8,000 now and is aiming at getting 14,000 ICU beds in the coming weeks, according to health authorities.

In the Paris region alone, the number of ICU beds has risen from 1,200 to 2,000 now, with almost the same number of patients needing intensive care.

BRATISLAVA, Slovakia — Slovakia's plant that belongs to Korea's carmaker Kia says it is planning to renew production as planned on April 6.

Kia halted its production lines located near the northwestern city of Zilina on March 21 amid the outbreak of the coronavirus.

It says that workers are coming back to work "under strict preventive measures." The plant creates some 3,800 jobs.

Slovakia has 363 cases of COVID-19, according to the government figures available on Wednesday morning.

Across the border in the Czech Republic, Kia's affiliate Hyundai said on Wednesday it extended the clo-

sure of its Czech plant by one week until April 14.

In another Slovak neighbor, Hungary, Suzuki announced that it is extending its plant's closure by two weeks, until April 17. Earlier, Hungary's Mercedes-Benz plant also extended its factory's closure, until April 21.

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkey has sent a planeload of masks, hazmat suits, goggles and disinfectants to Italy and Spain to help the countries combat the new coronavirus outbreak.

State-run Anadolu Agency said a military cargo plane carrying the medical equipment took off from an air base near Ankara on Wednesday.

The equipment was produced by military-owned factories and sewing workshops.

The items were being sent in crates displaying — in Italian and Spanish — the words of 13th century Sufi Poet Jalaluddin Rumi: "There is hope after despair and many suns after darkness."

The report did not say how many masks and other equipment were dispatched.

Follow AP news coverage of the coronavirus pandemic at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

Europe faces ICU crunch, rushes to build field hospitals

By NICOLE WINFIELD and ANGELA CHARLTON Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Facing intense surges in the need for hospital ICU beds, European nations are on a building and hiring spree, throwing together makeshift hospitals and shipping coronavirus patients out of overwhelmed cities via high-speed trains and military jets. The key question is whether they will be able to find enough healthy medical staff to make it all work.

Even as the virus has slowed its growth in overwhelmed Italy and in China, where it first emerged, hospitals in Spain and France are reaching their breaking points and the U.S. and Britain are bracing for incoming waves of desperately ill people.

"It feels like we are in a third world country. We don't have enough masks, enough protective equipment, and by the end of the week we might be in need of more medication too," said Paris emergency worker Christophe Prudhomme.

In a remarkable turnaround, rich economies where virus cases have exploded are welcoming help from less wealthy ones. Russia sent medical equipment and masks to the U.S. on Wednesday. Cuba sent doctors to France. Turkey sent masks, hazmat suits, goggles and disinfectants to Italy and Spain.

London is just days from unveiling a 4,000-bed temporary hospital built in a massive convention center to take non-critical patients so British hospitals can keep ahead of an expected surge in demand. Still, there are concerns about finding thousands of medical workers to run it.

Spain, which hit a new record Wednesday of 864 deaths in one day, has boosted its hospital beds by 20%. Hotspots in Madrid and northeast Catalonia have almost tripled their ICU capacity. Dozens of hotels across Spain have been turned into recovery rooms, and authorities are building field hospitals in sports centers, libraries and exhibition halls.

Intensive care units are particularly crucial in a pandemic in which tens of thousands of patients descend into acute respiratory distress. Those ICU units are much harder to cobble together quickly than standard hospital beds.

Milan opened an intensive care field hospital Tuesday at the city fairgrounds, complete with a pharmacy and radiology wards. It expects to eventually employ 900 staff. The move came after the health situation turned extreme in Italy's Lombardy region, where bodies overflowed in morgues, caskets piled up in churches and doctors were forced to decide which desperately ill patient would get a breathing machine.

"We aren't happy to have done this," fairgrounds foundation head Enrico Pazzali said. "It's something I never would have wanted to do."

The pressure is easing on hard-hit Italian cities like Bergamo and Brescia as the rate of new infections in Italy slows. Yet many Italians are still dying at home or in nursing homes because hospitals are saturated

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and they could not get access to ICU breathing machines.

With over 12,400 dead so far, Italy has the most coronavirus deaths of any nation.

Italy, Britain and France are among countries that have called in medical students, retired doctors and even laid-off flight attendants with first aid training to help, although all need re-training.

The medical staffing shortage has been exacerbated by the high numbers of infected personnel. In Italy alone, nearly 10,000 medical workers have been infected and more than 60 doctors have died.

While Spain's confirmed infections shot past 102,000 Wednesday and its deaths are now beyond 9,000, the increase in infections was less than the previous day, offering some hope that the contagion rate is stabilizing.

Still, COVID-19 patients who need intensive care can occupy a bed for three to four weeks, meaning Spain and other nations will still see increasing pressures on their hospitals for days or weeks to come.

The Paris region more than doubled its ICU capacity over the past week – but the beds are already full. So Paris was sending critically ill patients to less-saturated regions on special high-speed trains Wednesday. Others have been moved by military planes, helicopters or warships.

One reason Germany is in better shape than other European countries is its high proportion of ICU beds, at 33.9 per 100,000 people, compared to 8.6 in Italy. Germany has 775 virus deaths, 16 times fewer deaths than Italy.

Britain still has some free ICU beds available, but the outbreak is likely weeks away from its peak there and the U.K. has one of the lowest number of hospital beds per capita in Europe. The new hospital inside London's Excel center plans to admit its first patients at the end of this week. Chief operating officer Natalie Forrest warned that it will need thousands of doctors, nurses and volunteers.

"The numbers are scary," she said.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for others, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause severe symptoms like pneumonia and lead to death.

U.S. health authorities warned the number of dead could reach up to 240,000 even with social distancing measures in place as the New York region also rushed to set up extra hospital capacity.

A 1,000-bed emergency hospital at the mammoth Javits Convention Center began taking non-coronavirus patients on Tuesday to help relieve the city's overwhelmed health system. A Navy hospital ship was expected to accept patients soon, and the indoor tennis center that hosts the U.S. Open is being turned into a hospital.

"I want every American to be prepared for the hard days that lie ahead," President Donald Trump said Tuesday after he extended social distancing guidelines until April 30. "We're going to go through a very tough two weeks."

The U.S. recorded a big daily jump of 26,000 new cases, bringing its total infections to more than 189,000, the highest in the world. The U.S. death toll leapt to over 4,000, and refrigerated morgue trucks parked on New York streets to collect the dead.

Worldwide, more than 860,000 people have been confirmed infected and over 42,000 have died, according to a tally kept by Johns Hopkins University. Italy and Spain accounted for half of all the deaths. Everywhere, the real figures are believed to be much higher due to issues in counting infections and deaths.

China, where the outbreak began late last year, on Wednesday reported just 36 new COVID-19 cases.

Some people have chosen to ignore social distancing guidelines. In Louisiana, buses and cars filled a church parking lot Tuesday as worshippers flocked to hear a pastor who is facing charges for holding services despite a ban on gatherings. A few protesters also showed up at the Life Tabernacle Church, including one with a sign that read: "God don't like stupid."

Two ships carrying passengers and crew from an ill-fated South American cruise are urging Florida officials to let them dock. Four people aboard with the virus have died and nine have tested positive. Trump said, for humanitarian reasons, Florida should do so.

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Charlton reported from Paris. Associated Press writers around the world contributed to this report including Joseph Wilson in Barcelona; Danica Kirka and Jill Lawless in London; Karen Matthews in New York; and Nick Perry in Wellington, New Zealand.

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10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press undefined

Your daily look at late-breaking news, upcoming events and the stories that will be talked about today:

1. 'HARD DAYS LIE AHEAD' Trump is warning Americans to brace for a "hell of a bad two weeks" ahead as the White House projects that there could be 100,000 to 240,000 deaths in the U.S. from the coronavirus pandemic.

2. HOW GERMANY KEPT VIRUS DEATHS LOW By having their labs ramp up testing quickly, coupled with the country's large number of ICU beds and early implementation of social distancing measures.

3. EXPERTS DECRY MEXICO VIRUS POLICY DELAY Mexico starts taking tougher measures against the COVID-19 outbreak after weeks of its president hugging followers and saying religious medals would protect him.

4. RUSSIA DECLARES WAR ON 'FAKE NEWS' Lawmakers approve fines of up to \$25,000 and prison terms of up to five years for individuals who spread what is deemed to be false information about the coronavirus.

5. WHAT TRUMP'S ALLIES ARE WARNING AGAINST A dangerous election-year fight with Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, as the state has emerged as one of a handful of presidential battlegrounds that will control Trump's fate.

6. IT'S CENSUS DAY Officials vow to complete the once-a-decade count by its year-end deadline despite a nation almost paralyzed by the spread of the novel coronavirus.

7. NEW PROBLEMS FOUND WITH FBI WIRETAP APPLICATIONS The Justice Department watchdog finds additional failures in the agency's handling of a secretive surveillance program that came under scrutiny after the Russia investigation.

8. WHEN YOU CAN EXPECT STIMULUS CHECKS Americans will start receiving their economic impact checks in the next three weeks, the IRS and the Treasury Department say.

9. 'WE'RE GOING TO SUFFER' Looking pale and bleary-eyed, Chris Cuomo anchored his CNN show from his Long Island basement after testing positive for the coronavirus, telling viewers to "brace" for what's to come.

10. LET'S GO TO THE TAPE Forbidden from meeting with college prospects in person, NFL teams are having to rely more heavily on game film for the draft as a viral pandemic halts business as usual.

Trump allies warn against feud with swing state governor

By STEVE PEOPLES and DAVID EGGERT Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — President Donald Trump's allies are trying to contain a politically risky election year fight with Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer as he struggles to balance presidential politics with a global pandemic in one of the nation's most important swing states.

Both sides have tried to de-escalate the feud this week, although Trump's supporters in particular sought to downplay tensions that ratcheted up over the weekend when the Republican president unleashed a social media broadside against Whitmer, a Democrat who had been critical of the federal government's response to the coronavirus outbreak. Trump has clashed with other Democratic governors as well, but he saved his most aggressive insults for the first-term female governor, who is considered a leading vice presidential prospect for his opponent.

"Everyone should be shedding the partisanship and coming together," Republican National Committee

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Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel said in an interview when asked about Trump's attacks, suggesting that some of his criticism had been mischaracterized.

"I am rooting for Gov. Whitmer," said McDaniel, who lives in Michigan. "I think she's done good things. ... I just didn't like her trying to lay every problem at the president's feet."

The backpedaling underscores the nature of the dispute, which comes seven months before Election Day in a state that could make or break Trump's reelection bid. Michigan is an elite presidential battleground that has historically celebrated bipartisanship and pragmatism while rewarding candidates who rally behind key institutions in crisis. Four years ago, Trump eked out a win by about 11,000 votes out of more than 4.5 million cast in the state.

Mitt Romney, the 2012 Republican presidential nominee and McDaniel's uncle, lost his home state of Michigan in 2012 after opposing federal efforts to rescue the automotive industry. And Trump, by unleashing a personal attack against the state's governor in the midst of a pandemic, has sparked new fears that he, too, may be hurting himself and his party on the eve of the next election.

Michigan Rep. Paul Mitchell, a Republican, said he raised concerns about Trump's political attack with the administration directly.

"I did relay to the administration that I didn't think it was helpful and why play that game," Mitchell said in an interview. "These are times when the American people look for leaders. Leaders don't whine. Leaders don't blame."

He said he raised similar concerns with Whitmer's office, suggesting that her criticisms about the federal response have not necessarily been accurate.

"This is not the time where we need more drama in this country," Mitchell said.

While political fights are common for Trump, Whitmer's rise in Democratic politics has been defined by her decision usually not to attack the president.

Whitmer, a 48-year-old longtime state legislator and attorney, ran for governor as a pragmatic liberal, emphasizing her bipartisan work while pledging to fix Michigan's crumbling roads. She rarely talked about Trump before the election or after.

But as a frequent guest on national media in recent weeks, Whitmer has criticized the federal response while pleading for ventilators, personal protection equipment and test kits as Michigan has emerged as one of the hardest-hit states. Republicans were especially upset after she implied during a Friday radio interview that the Trump administration was intentionally withholding medical supplies from Michigan.

In a weekend tweet storm as the coronavirus death toll surged, Trump called her "Gretchen 'Half' Whitmer," charging that she was "way over her head" and "doesn't have a clue" about how to handle the health crisis. Two days earlier, Trump said publicly that he had instructed Vice President Mike Pence, the leader of the White House's pandemic response, not to call "the woman in Michigan."

Trump has since deleted the tweet. And in a press briefing on Tuesday, he said he had a productive conversation with Whitmer earlier in the day.

The governor, too, has backed away from the feud this week as the state grapples with the escalating crisis. Michigan reported more than 7,600 cases of coronavirus and 259 deaths as of Tuesday.

In a statement, Whitmer declared that her "No. 1 priority is protecting Michigan families from the spread of COVID-19."

"I don't care about partisan fights or getting nicknames from the president," she said.

Yet Trump's initial fiery response — and the scramble to contain it — is nothing if not consistent. The former New York real estate magnate has showed he cannot help but respond with force when criticized. As first lady Melania Trump noted almost exactly four years ago, "When you attack him he will punch back 10 times harder."

In this case, however, allies quietly note that he did not consider the likely political ramifications in a state he badly needs to win in November.

"Anyone with half a brain can see that attacking an incredibly popular governor who's showing real leadership during a crisis is not a net plus," said John Anzalone, whose firm handles polling for Whitmer

and former Vice President Joe Biden's presidential campaign.

Biden has stood up for Whitmer repeatedly in recent days. On Tuesday evening, Biden's senior adviser Anita Dunn reinforced Biden's support for the governor, who she said "is fighting hard for her state and setting an example for leaders across the nation."

"Joe Biden prays that Donald Trump can find the strength to live up to her example," Dunn said.

Meanwhile, it was difficult to find a Michigan Republican willing to defend Trump's behavior.

A spokeswoman for Republican state Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey had this to say when asked about Trump's declaration that Pence should not call Whitmer: "The Senate majority leader believes everyone is coping with an unusual amount of stress during this time."

The clash was particularly sensitive because of the evolving nature of gender politics in the Trump era. Suburban women, including many Republicans, have increasingly fled Trump's GOP, enabling major Democratic victories across the country in 2018 and 2019.

His decision to single out Whitmer came the same week he attacked another high-profile Michigan woman, General Motors CEO Mary Barra, whom he jabbed for not working fast enough to help the government produce ventilators.

"Always a mess with Mary B," Trump tweeted.

Trump's team hopes to repair the relationship with suburban women before Election Day, at least somewhat, in a state that matters more than most. Democrats will not make it easy.

"It's sad but not shocking that President Trump has attacked Gov. Whitmer for doing her job. He clearly has a problem with strong, competent women," said Stephanie Schriock, president of the group EMILY'S List, which helps elect women who support abortion rights.

Meanwhile, Republican Bill Schuette, whom Whitmer defeated in 2018, praised Trump's leadership managing the pandemic but also said "we need to lay down the politics" in response to questions about the president's divisive comments and her performance during the crisis.

"This is not a time for partisanship," Schuette said. "This is a time of working together in an open, honest fashion. That's what people expect and deserve, particularly in a time of crisis."

Peoples reported from New York.

Catch up on the 2020 election campaign with AP experts on our weekly politics podcast, "Ground Game."

Trump says 'life and death' at stake in following guidelines

By **AAMER MADHANI, KEVIN FREKING and RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump warned Americans to brace for a "hell of a bad two weeks" ahead as the White House projected there could be 100,000 to 240,000 deaths in the U.S. from the coronavirus pandemic even if current social distancing guidelines are maintained.

Public health officials stressed Tuesday that the number could be less if people across the country bear down on keeping their distance from one another.

"We really believe we can do a lot better than that," said Dr. Deborah Birx, the coordinator of the White House coronavirus task force. That would require all Americans to take seriously their role in preventing the spread of disease, she said.

Added Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious disease expert, "This is a number that we need to anticipate, but we don't necessarily have to accept it as being inevitable."

Trump called it "a matter of life and death" for Americans to heed his administration's guidelines and predicted the country would soon see a "light at the end of the tunnel" in a pandemic that in the United States has infected about 190,000 people and killed about 4,000, according to figures compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

"I want every American to be prepared for the hard days that lie ahead," Trump said.

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"This is going to be one of the roughest two or three weeks we've ever had in our country," Trump added. "We're going to lose thousands of people."

The jaw-dropping projections were laid out during a grim, two-hour White House briefing. Officials described a death toll that in a best-case scenario would likely be greater than the more than 53,000 American lives lost during World War I. And the model's high end neared the realm of possibility that Americans lost to the virus could approach the 291,000 Americans killed on the battlefield during World War II.

"There's no magic bullet," Birx said. "There's no magic vaccine or therapy. It's just behaviors. Each of our behaviors, translating into something that changes the course of this viral pandemic."

Fauci called the numbers "sobering" and urged Americans to "step on the accelerator" with their collective mitigation efforts.

"We are continuing to see things go up," Fauci said. "We cannot be discouraged by that because the mitigation is actually working and will work."

Birx said pandemic forecasts initially predicted 1.5 million to 2.2 million deaths in the U.S. But that was a worst-case scenario, without efforts to slow the spread of the coronavirus through social distancing. She added that states that have not yet seen a spike in cases as New York has could take action to flatten the curve of rising hospitalizations and deaths.

It's not only social distancing that could make a difference but also the frantic efforts by hospitals around the country to prepare for an onslaught of seriously ill patients. The better prepared hospitals are, the greater the chances of lives being saved.

There's also a wild card when it comes to treatment: whether the experimental drug combination Trump has touted — a medicine for malaria and an antibiotic — will actually make a difference. That combination is already being used on thousands of patients, and Fauci said he would want to see a rigorous test of its effectiveness.

Trump's comments came after he announced Sunday that he was extending to April 30 the social distancing guidelines that advise Americans to cease large gatherings, work from home, suspend onsite learning at schools and more in a nationwide effort to stem the spread of the virus.

It was an abrupt reversal for the Republican president, who spent much of last week targeting April 12 as the day he wanted to see Americans "pack the pews" for Easter Sunday services.

Trump called the data "very sobering," saying it was his understanding that 100,000 deaths was a minimum that would be difficult to avoid. He also sought to rewrite his past minimization of the outbreak, saying he rejected those who compared the new coronavirus to the flu when in fact he repeatedly did so publicly.

"This could be hell of a bad two weeks," Trump said. He added: "You know 100,000 is, according to modeling, a very low number. In fact, when I first saw the number ... they said it was unlikely you'll be able to attain that. We have to see but I think we're doing better than that."

Trump played down concerns from New York's Andrew Cuomo and other governors that their states' hospitals don't have enough ventilators to treat an anticipated crush of patients. Trump said the federal government currently has a stockpile of 10,000 ventilators that it plans on distributing as needed.

"Now, when the surge occurs, if it occurs fairly evenly, we'll be able to distribute them very quickly before they need them," Trump said. "But we want to have a reserve right now. It's like having oil reserves."

Birx said the experiences of Washington state and California give her hope that other states can keep the coronavirus under control through social distancing. That's because they moved quickly to contain the early clusters of coronavirus by closing schools, urging people to work from home, banning large gatherings and taking other measures now familiar to most Americans, she noted.

"I am reassured by looking at the Seattle line," she added. "California and Washington state reacted very early to this." Many other states and local governments already have stiff controls in place on mobility and gatherings.

Trump said he would also ask Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis to allow the docking of two cruise ships with passengers who have had contact with patients suffering from COVID-19. Passengers are anxious to disembark once they reach Florida, but DeSantis said the state's health care resources are already stretched

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too thin to take on a ship's coronavirus caseload.

"They're dying on the ship," Trump said. "I'm going to do what's right, not only for us but for humanity."

Trump also said he planned to curtail his travel for the month ahead and stay close to the White House to safeguard his health. The president hasn't held one of his signature big-stadium rallies since early March, and it's unlikely he'll be holding another one anytime soon.

"I think it's important that I remain healthy. I really do," Trump said. "So for the most part we're staying here."

Trump spoke after another troubling day for the stock market, which has been in a free fall as the coronavirus ground the economy to a near-halt and left millions of people unemployed. The Dow Jones Industrial Average plunged more than 400 points, or roughly 1.9%, to seal the worst first-quarter finish of its 135-year history.

This story has been corrected to say Tuesday, not Wednesday.

Volunteers fill gaps amid UK pandemic lockdown

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The Rev. April Keech knocked on the door of an apartment in east London, took three giant steps back and made way for other volunteers to lay a bag of groceries on the threshold.

The jovial Anglican priest seemed to want to hug the resident, Peter Kraus, when he came to the door, but restrained herself to abide by social distancing requirements for slowing the spread of the coronavirus.

"Hello, Pete! That's your bag," Keech told the 68-year-old retired merchant seaman, who lives alone. "I hope you're OK!"

Keech and her team of volunteers have spent the past two weeks buying groceries, filling prescriptions and making deliveries to residents in east London who are at risk of serious illness or death from the COVID-19 disease. The U.K. has reported more than 25,000 confirmed cases, and 1,789 virus-related deaths among those hospitalized.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia and death.

Britain is in the process of mobilizing around 750,000 volunteers to help vulnerable people after the government ordered a nationwide lockdown. So many individuals have offered to help — three times more than requested — that the government put recruitment on hold until it could process the number who had already come forward.

Since the government initiative is just starting, people like Keech have stepped into the breach to assist those who need help now — not in a week or two.

"Kindness now and compassion for what other people are going through is crucial to help us understand one another, and connect to one another," said Keech, an associate priest at St. Paul Old Ford Church. "And I think about what is going on here ... and what is to come. We're not even at the peak of this in London."

Kraus is grateful. He recently had a stomach operation, so it is risky for him to go outside and move around the city.

"It's very kind of them to do that," he said of the weekly deliveries of canned beans, bread and other groceries at his door. "It saves us from going down to the supermarket."

Keech organized a handful of volunteers after a local doctor asked her to help make sure at-risk patients got their medication days before the lockdown took effect a week ago. Many of those who need assistance are elderly people who have a high risk of respiratory complications, don't hear well or are a bit baffled by the new invisible enemy. Some sought help just because they were afraid to be alone.

The government is counting on citizens to pitch in and help stretch the resources of local authorities, first responders and the National Health Service like previous generations did during World War II. While attitudes and technology have changed since the 1940s and many people no longer know their neighbors,

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officials organizing the national effort are encouraged by the outpouring of volunteers.

"We have been absolutely overwhelmed by the response and cannot thank the public enough," Royal Voluntary Service CEO Catherine Johnstone said. "As history shows, it is often in times of crisis that we pull together and become our best selves."

Keech has found herself buying lots of beans and white bread for older people, some of whom remember the rationing of the war years. Then there's the occasional request for something super specific: Can she find boneless, skinless sardines packed with red pepper or olives?

"We are not just here for ourselves, but for others," she said. "As they heal and receive hope, so do we."

Follow AP news coverage of the coronavirus pandemic at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

More than 50 infected with virus at California nursing home

By ROBERT JABLON Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A Southern California nursing home has been hit hard by the coronavirus, with more than 50 residents infected — a troubling development amid cautious optimism that cases in the state may peak more slowly than expected.

Cedar Mountain Post Acute Rehabilitation in Yucaipa has been told to assume that all of its patients have the COVID-19 virus, San Bernardino County Department of Public Health Director Trudy Raymundo said. As of Tuesday, 51 residents and six staff members had tested positive. Two patients have died, including an 82-year-old woman who had existing health problems.

The nursing home east of Los Angeles isn't accepting new residents and the facility has been closed to visitors under Gov. Gavin Newsom's two-week-old stay-at-home order, Raymundo said.

The announcement came as Newsom said extraordinary efforts to keep people home have bought the time needed to prepare for an expected peak surge of coronavirus cases in coming weeks.

Newsom said the slower-than-forecast increase in cases means the peak is now likely to occur in May, though he was reluctant to say whether that means the impact on the state won't be nearly as dire as initially feared.

Two weeks ago, Newsom said more than half the state's 40 million people could be infected under a worst-case scenario.

"To be truthful and candid, the current modeling is on the lower end of our projection as I talk to you today," Newsom said Tuesday. "Very easily tomorrow I could say something differently, and that's why one just has to be very cautious about this."

Under Newsom's direction, the state has been scrambling to add 50,000 hospital beds to its current 75,000 to ensure enough space for all potential patients during a peak.

On Tuesday, there were more than 8,200 cases and at least 173 deaths reported in California, according to data kept by Johns Hopkins University. Michigan, which has 30 million fewer residents, had about 7,600 cases and at least 259 deaths.

Health officials have warned that as testing ramps up, the number of cases will grow, in some instances very quickly.

Many have credited the state's early action to issue stay-at-home orders — first in the San Francisco Bay Area two weeks ago and then a few days later in Los Angeles and the rest of the state — with successfully slowing the rise of cases.

Many retail businesses and social venues such as theme parks are closed, restaurants are only offering take out or delivery, and most school campuses have been closed for weeks.

On Tuesday, San Francisco and six surrounding counties extended shelter-in-place orders until May 3 and added new restrictions, including closing playgrounds, dog parks, public picnic areas, golf courses, tennis and basketball courts, pools, and rock-climbing walls.

Also on Tuesday, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond warned that he expects

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schools to remain closed into summer and suggested that districts plan to provide other forms of learning for the rest of the academic year.

Millions of youngsters are getting "distance learning" through online teaching or other methods, such as watching special public broadcasting programs. However, the Los Angeles Unified School District hasn't reached all its 600,000 students.

Some 15,000 high schoolers haven't taken part in any online learning and another 26,000 who are participating haven't checked in on a daily basis since campuses closed on March 16, Superintendent Austin Beutner said Monday.

While social distancing precautions seem to be generally obeyed by California's population, there are concerns that the virus will rampage through enclosed, crowded facilities such as nursing homes and prisons, and among the state's estimated 150,000 homeless people, who are hard to test or quarantine.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia and death.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said that nursing home populations are at the highest risk of being affected by COVID-19 given the "congregate nature" of the facilities and the fact that many residents have chronic medical conditions.

Eight residents of a New Jersey nursing home have died and all 94 residents of another New Jersey home were moved to another facility after two dozen tested positive for the coronavirus. In Washington state, some 35 residents of a single home near Seattle have died.

U.S. Rep. Paul Cook, who represents the area that includes Yucaipa, said he and others had told themselves: "God almighty, I hope that it never breaks out in a convalescent home," and this is what has happened."

"It could be serious today and even worse tomorrow if we don't do our jobs," he said. "We've got to make sure that this does not spread."

Dr. Deborah Birx, coordinator of the White House coronavirus task force, said actions by California and Washington state to close schools, encourage people to work from home and only go out for essential needs had given her hope the virus could be controlled through social distancing measures.

Birx spoke Tuesday as grim new projections of 100,000 to 240,000 deaths nationwide were announced and President Donald Trump called on Americans to heed his safety guidelines, which are weaker than those in place in California and several other states.

Ronayne reported from Sacramento. Associated Press reporters Cuneyt Dil and Don Thompson in Sacramento, Olga R. Rodriguez in San Francisco and Christopher Weber in Los Angeles contributed to this story.

Mass testing, empty ICUs: Germany scores early against virus

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Late last year — long before most people had heard of the new coronavirus now sweeping the globe — scientists in Germany sprang into action to develop a test for the virus causing an unusual respiratory disease in central China.

They had one by mid-January — and labs around the country were ready to start using it just weeks later, around the same time that Europe's most populous country registered its first case.

"It was clear that if the epidemic swept over here from China, then we had to start testing," said Hendrik Borucki, a spokesman for Bioscientia Healthcare, which operates 19 labs in Germany.

That quick work stands in stark contrast to delays and missteps in other countries. Coupled with Germany's large number of intensive care beds and its early social distancing measures, it could explain one of the most interesting puzzles of the COVID-19 pandemic: Why people with the virus in Germany currently appear to be dying at much lower rates than in neighboring countries.

The numbers are remarkable: As confirmed cases in Germany passed 71,000 the death toll Wednesday

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was 775, according to a tally kept by Johns Hopkins University. In contrast, Italy has reported almost 106,000 infections and more than 12,400 deaths, while Spain has more than 96,000 cases, with more than 8,400 deaths.

France has four times as many virus deaths as Germany and Britain has twice as many, even though both countries have fewer reported infections.

There may be many factors at play, but experts said early on that fast and widespread testing gave Germany an edge.

"The reason why we in Germany have so few deaths at the moment compared to the number of infected can be largely explained by the fact that we are doing an extremely large number of lab diagnoses," said virologist Dr. Christian Drosten, whose team developed the first test for the new virus at Berlin's Charité hospital — established over 300 years ago to treat plague victims.

He estimated that Germany is now capable of conducting up to 500,000 tests a week.

Spain, meanwhile, tests between 105,000 and 140,000 people each week, about 20% to 30% what Germany is capable of. Italy did around 200,000 tests over the past week, but that reflects a significant recent ramp-up.

Early access to the test from Drosten's team is only part of the reason for Germany's head start. Before the country even registered its first case, authorities agreed the tests would be covered by its universal insurance system, and be available to everyone with symptoms and either recent travel to virus hotspots or close contact with a confirmed case.

Still, Germany may not be as much of an anomaly as it seems. The fact that Spain and Italy — which have seen much more intense outbreaks — are doing fewer tests indicates they are missing many mild or asymptomatic cases. That makes their fatality rates look worse than they are. But Germany, too, is likely missing cases, and experts say that all figures worldwide undercount the extent of the pandemic.

Limited testing also means the true spread of the virus is hidden in those countries — further fueling the outbreak.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms. But for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness and lead to death.

Ensuring those severely ill patients can be treated properly is key to managing the outbreak — and preventing deaths.

And there again, Germany has an advantage.

Italy has 8.6 intensive care unit beds per 100,000 people, according to the Organization for Cooperation and Economic Development. By comparison, Germany has 33.9 per 100,000 for a total of about 28,000, a number the government wants to double.

"We are well prepared today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow," said Dr. Uwe Janssens, who heads Germany's Interdisciplinary Association for Intensive Care and Emergency Medicine.

Hospitals in the hardest-hit areas of Italy, are now buckling under the weight of treating so many ill patients at once, contributing the country's death toll — the highest in the world.

In the rare position of having beds to spare, German hospitals have taken in dozens of patients from Italy and France. While that will allow German doctors and nurses to learn how to treat severely ill COVID-19 patients, it also reflects a remarkable confidence in the country's ability to manage its outbreak at a time when many others are shutting their borders.

The Robert Koch Institute, Germany's disease control center, has suggested that strong measures imposed almost three weeks ago, including closing schools and restaurants, and later barring more than two people from gathering outside, seem to have slowed the rate of new infections.

Experts have bemoaned that many countries took similar steps too late.

Scientists advising the British government say major social distancing measures are necessary before there are 0.2 deaths per 100,000 people. According to the, albeit imperfect, data available, Italy imposed its lockdown four days after hitting that threshold but Germany's came a week before that level was reached.

Officials stress Germany is still in an early stage of its outbreak. But Dr. Sebastian Johnston, a professor

of respiratory medicine at Imperial College London, said countries that intervene early with aggressive measures should theoretically be able to avoid the tsunami of cases seen in Italy and Spain.

"We were lucky to have had a long time to prepare," said Dr. Susanne Herold, a specialist for lung infections at the university hospital in Giessen. For weeks, her staff has been installing new ICU beds, training in the use of ventilators and planning for an emergency scenario.

Amid the cautious optimism, there are those who warn against complacency.

Chancellor Angela Merkel — who is herself in isolation after her doctor tested positive — has resisted calls to loosen the lockdown. A top government medical adviser, Lothar Wieler of the Robert Koch Institute, said he wouldn't rule out Germany's health system reaching its limit, too.

"This is still the calm before the storm," Health Minister Jens Spahn said last week.

Associated Press writers Nicole Winfield in Rome and Maria Cheng in London contributed to this report.

Follow AP news coverage of the coronavirus pandemic at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

Fake news or the truth? Russia cracks down on virus postings

By DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Two weeks ago, an opposition-leaning radio station in Russia interviewed political analyst Valery Solovei, who alleged the government was lying when it said no one had died in the country from the coronavirus.

Solovei told radio station Echo Moskvyy at least 1,600 people might have died since mid-January. Russia's media and internet watchdog, Roscomnadzor, quickly pressured the station to delete the interview from its website.

The demand was part of a widespread government campaign against what authorities called "fake news" about the pandemic.

On Tuesday, Russian lawmakers began putting some teeth behind the campaign, approving fines of up to \$25,000 and prison terms of up to five years for anyone who spreads what is deemed to be false information. Media outlets will be fined up to \$127,000 if they disseminate disinformation about the outbreak.

Lawmakers rushed the bill through all three readings in just one day after President Vladimir Putin spoke about the need to counter "provocations, stupid gossip and malicious lies" about the outbreak.

The crusade began about a month ago, when Russia's caseload was still in the single digits. The Kremlin's stance of "everything is under control" prompted speculation that authorities might be hiding or underreporting the scale of the outbreak in line with Soviet-era traditions of covering up embarrassing truths.

A broad set of measures was outlined and a special "fake news" division in the government's coronavirus task force was created. A group within Russia's Investigative Committee was put together to chase down alleged disinformation.

Social media users who doubted the official numbers and news outlets questioning the government response became targets for law enforcement seeking to weed out anything that didn't correspond with the official data.

"In crises, those in power try very hard to control the information and push their own agenda. And, of course, it makes sense to suppress alternative points of view," Solovei told The Associated Press.

The AP found at least nine cases against ordinary Russians accused of spreading "untrue information" on social media and via messenger apps, with at least three of them receiving significant fines.

Police statements offered few details but clearly indicated those involved were merely sharing opinions or rumors, rather than deliberately spreading misinformation.

A 32-year-old woman was fined \$380 — a significant sum in a country with an average monthly salary of about \$550 — for posting on social media something she heard on a bus about the virus in her region.

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A 26-year-old man was fined a similar amount for a comment he made under a news report claiming a woman died of the virus in a hospital. Another woman faces a fine of about \$380-\$1,200 for posting about virus cases in her region where no infections were officially reported.

Asked whether the punishments fit these crimes, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said they were "absolutely justified."

"It stirs up unwarranted tensions, and in this situation it needs to be punished in accordance with the law," he said.

The crackdown on free speech fits a recent pattern. In the past five years, hundreds of people have been prosecuted on charges of extremism for posting, liking or sharing information on social media on sensitive topics like corruption, the conflict with Ukraine, the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the role of the Russian Orthodox Church. Dozens received prison sentences.

In 2018, Putin acknowledged that prosecuting social media users sometimes turns into "idiocy and absurdity," and he eased the regulations. Such online hunts have since fizzled out, said Damir Gainutdinov, an internet freedom lawyer with Agora, Russia's prominent legal aid group.

But the void is quickly filling again with a crackdown on those who insult officials or spread so-called "fake news" online - misdemeanors that parliament put on the books last year.

"I think in the nearest future, we will see a rapid growth (of cases) related to fakes as the authorities are trying to suppress any nonofficial information about the coronavirus," Gainutdinov told AP.

On Monday, Hungary's parliament also passed a law setting prison terms of up to five years for those convicted of spreading false information about the pandemic. Rights groups said the law allows the government to crack down on press freedom.

The effort to curb alleged disinformation at home came as Russia is once again being accused of spreading it abroad. The European Union recently identified nearly 80 instances of virus-related disinformation in the past two months.

This also follows accusations by U.S. intelligence services that Russia interfered with the 2016 presidential election by spreading false information online — a charge that the Kremlin has steadfastly denied.

Waging disinformation campaigns in the West stems from the same desire to control the narrative, said Mark Galeotti, a Russia expert at the Royal United Services Institute.

To the Kremlin, "there is no such thing as an objective narrative. So given that it is going to be someone's narrative that triumphs, of course, you want it to be your narrative rather than someone else's," Galeotti told the AP.

Kremlin critics argue that its effort to stifle alternative voices during the pandemic is unlikely to succeed.

Dr. Anastasia Vasilyeva, who works with opposition figure Alexei Navalny and leads the Alliance of Doctors union, made headlines in recent weeks exposing Russia's underfunded, teetering health care system. She told the AP she was contacted by police about spreading false information in her YouTube blog.

"They will have to prove that I lied, so let them prove it," Vasilyeva said. "They want to scare me in order to stop the others ... the truth won't change because of it."

Even as Russia moved to control the narrative during the outbreak, some embarrassing news has still slipped out.

On Tuesday, Dr. Denis Protsenko, head of Moscow's top hospital for coronavirus patients, was reported to have the virus. That came only a week after Putin visited the hospital and was photographed shaking hands with Protsenko.

Peskov sought to assure the country that Putin was fine.

"He's being tested regularly. It's all right," Peskov was quoted by the RIA Novosti news agency as saying.

—

Daniel Kozin in Moscow contributed.

Follow AP coverage of the virus outbreak at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

Census Day arrives with US almost paralyzed by coronavirus

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Census Day — the date used to reference where a person lives for the once-a-decade count — arrived Wednesday with a nation almost paralyzed by the spread of the novel coronavirus. But census officials vowed the job would be completed by its year-end deadline.

The virus's spread has forced the U.S. Census Bureau to suspend field operations for a month, from mid-March to mid-April, when the hiring process would be ramping up for up to 500,000 temporary census takers. The bureau also has delayed the start of counts for the homeless and people living in group quarters like college dorms and nursing homes, and has pushed back the deadline for wrapping up the head count from the end of July to mid-August.

The Census Bureau is required by federal statute to send the president the counts that will be used to carve up congressional districts — a process known as apportionment — and draw state legislative districts by Dec. 31. Some groups are suggesting that the deadline be pushed back, though it's currently mandated by federal law.

"We are laser-focused on the statute's Dec. 31 deadline for apportionment counts and population counts. We will continue to assess all of our operations to see if there are any changes that need to be made," Michael Cook, chief of the Public Information Office at the U.S. Census Bureau, said Tuesday.

The head count started in late January in rural, native villages in Alaska, but the rest of the country wasn't able to start answering the questionnaire until the second week of March when the Census Bureau's self-response website went live and people received notices in the mail that they could start answering the questions. But that was only a week before many governors and mayors started issuing stay-at-home orders to slow the virus's spread, greatly hindering in-person rallies, meetings and door-knocking by activists to raise awareness about the 2020 census.

Experts say connecting with trusted community leaders in person is the best way to reach people in hard-to-count groups that may be wary of the federal government.

"There is the issue of attention. Certainly when folks are anxious about the public health issue, and kids are away from school, and they're being away from work, it's a concern that the census isn't on top of people's mind as you would want it to be," said Thomas Saenz, president of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

The U.S. Census Bureau is spending \$500 million on outreach efforts, including advertising, and it's relying on more than 300,000 nonprofits, businesses, local governments and civic groups to encourage participation in their communities. Those efforts have been hamstrung by the nationwide shutdown.

Two surveys by the Pew Research Center suggest the messaging was reaching an audience — at least before the coronavirus outbreak. Pew conducted two surveys, one in early January and another in late February and early March. During that time, those who had seen or heard something about the census grew from half to two-thirds of respondents, the center survey found.

Most of the census takers won't be sent out until late May to knock on the doors of homes where people haven't yet answered the questions online, by telephone or by mailing back a paper questionnaire. Until then, the Census Bureau is pushing people to answer the questions so they won't have anyone knocking on their doors in late spring and summer.

As of Monday, more than 36% of households had already answered the questions, and the Census Bureau reported this week that 40,300 temporary workers were on the payroll as of mid-March.

The 2020 census will help determine how many congressional seats and Electoral College votes each state gets, as well as the distribution of some \$1.5 trillion in federal spending.

Researchers at the Urban Institute worry that changed accommodations made in response to the coronavirus may present a distorted picture of where people are living on Census Day. Some people have left their usual residences to move back in with parents or elderly relatives, escaped to vacation homes or had to move because they couldn't pay rent due to lost jobs during the pandemic, they said.

Urban Institute researchers said the Census Bureau needs more processing time to identify duplicate

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responses and offer additional guidelines about how people should respond when the traditional recommendation to answer where you are living on April 1 is no longer clear for some. They're asking that the Dec. 31 deadline be postponed, which would require an act of Congress.

"There's no way reliable counts are going to be generated by the end of December," said Robert Santos, vice president and chief methodologist at the Urban Institute. "It's implausible."

Follow Mike Schneider on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/MikeSchneiderAP>.

AP FACT CHECK: Trump's misfires on virus death rates, tests

By HOPE YEN, LAURAN NEERGAARD and CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Facing a grim reality of surging coronavirus cases, President Donald Trump is making premature assertions about relatively low death rates in the U.S. and revising history about how seriously he viewed the threat, including the need for ventilators.

A look at his claims:

MORTALITY

TRUMP: "So we have more cases than anybody, but we're doing really well, and we also have a very low — relative to other countries — very low mortality rate. And there are reasons for that." — interview Monday with "Fox & Friends."

TRUMP: "We've been doing more test — tests than any other country anywhere in the world. It's one of the reasons that we have more cases than other countries, because we've been testing. It's also one of the reasons that we're just about the lowest in terms of mortality rate." — news briefing Sunday.

THE FACTS: His suggestion that the U.S. response is better than other countries' because its mortality rate is "just about the lowest" is unsupported and misleading.

It's too early to know the real death rate from COVID-19 in any country. Look at a count kept by Johns Hopkins University, and you can divide the number of recorded deaths with the number of reported cases. But that math provides a completely unreliable measurement of death rates, and the Johns Hopkins tally is not intended to be that.

First, the count changes every day as new infections and deaths are recorded.

More importantly, every country is testing differently. Knowing the real denominator, the true number of people who become infected, is key to determining what portion of them die. Some countries, the U.S. among them, have had trouble making enough tests available. When there's a shortage of tests, the sickest get tested first. And even with a good supply of tests, someone who's otherwise healthy and has mild symptoms may not be tested and thus go uncounted.

The result is a hodgepodge of numbers that get sorted out as the crisis diminishes. Indeed, initial death rates were thought to be as high as 4% in parts of China. But a report published Monday in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases* calculated that 1.38% actually is the best estimate of deaths among confirmed cases across China and that accounting for unconfirmed cases could drop that rate below 1%.

U.S. infectious-disease expert Dr. Anthony Fauci has estimated that the death rate in the U.S. might hit around 1%, which would be 10 times higher than mortality from a typical flu season.

Whatever the actual percentage, the more people who become infected, the higher the numbers of deaths, one reason authorities are stressing social distancing measures to stem the virus' spread and prevent hospitals from being overwhelmed by a surge of patients. And in each country, the age and overall health of the population are factors, too. Italy, for example, has the world's second-oldest population, and seniors are at an especially high risk of death.

FEDERAL AID FOR STATES

TRUMP: "I get on calls, and I get on a lot of the governor calls where we'll have all 50 governors plus where we have some territories also, but we have 50 governors. And I'll tell you what, if you could listen to those calls, you'd never hear a complaint." — interview with "Fox & Friends."

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THE FACTS: That's false, by his own accounting. He's complained about the complaints of governors. And The Associated Press has heard governors complaining to Trump privately on the phone.

"Some of these governors take, take, take and then they complain," Trump grouched in an interview Thursday on Fox News Channel's "Hannity." Of Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan, he said, "All she does is sit there and blame the federal government." And he said Washington Gov. Jay Inslee, also a Democrat, "should be doing more," adding, "He's always complaining."

"You know," Trump said from the White House, "we don't like to see the complaints."

On a private conference call Thursday with governors, Inslee urged Trump to use his full authority to spur production of necessary medical equipment, according to an audio recording of the call obtained by the AP. Trump replied that the federal government is merely the "backup."

"I don't want you to be the backup quarterback; we need to be Tom Brady here," Inslee replied, invoking the football star.

The nation's governors have been pressing the president to do more to bolster supplies, despite the perceived risks of speaking out. They have pleaded with him to use the Defense Production Act to force companies to manufacture critical equipment and begged for help in obtaining supplies like masks and testing agents.

On Friday, Trump told reporters that he wants governors "to be appreciative" of the federal government's efforts because "we have done a hell of a job."

Still, in a conference call with Trump on Monday, several governors made clear the federal government wasn't doing enough.

Every governor understands "we are way behind the curve on test kits," Inslee said in the recording.

Republican Gov. Larry Hogan of Maryland voiced appreciation for the \$2.2 trillion economic stimulus bill that Trump signed into law last week and the president's acknowledgement that states will need more help. But he emphasized that governors are "still frustrated" about a scarcity of medical supplies.

YAMICHE ALCINDOR, "PBS NewsHour" reporter, at White House briefing Sunday: "You've said repeatedly that you think that some of the equipment that governors are requesting, they don't actually need. You said New York might not need 30,000 ventilators."

TRUMP: "I didn't say that."

ALCINDOR: "You said it on Sean Hannity's Fox News."

TRUMP: "I didn't say — come on."

THE FACTS: He did say that.

In his interview Thursday with Hannity, Trump pointed out that New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, a Democrat, had said he wanted "30,000 of them, 30,000."

"All right. Think of this," Trump went on. "You know, you go to hospitals. They'll have one in a hospital. And now, all of a sudden, everybody's asking for these vast numbers."

Trump then suggested that pleas for more ventilators were exaggerated. "I have a feeling that a lot of the numbers that are being said in some areas are just bigger than they're going to be," he said.

"I don't believe you need 40,000 or 30,000 ventilators," Trump continued. "You know, you're going to major hospitals sometimes, they'll have two ventilators. And now, all of a sudden, they're saying, can we order 30,000 ventilators?"

By the following day as coronavirus cases grew, he switched gears and invoked the Defense Production Act to force General Motors to produce ventilators for coronavirus patients while calling on Twitter for GM to "START MAKING VENTILATORS, NOW!!!!!!" and Ford to "GET GOING ON VENTILATORS, FAST!!!!!!"

When Trump was asked by reporters Friday why he invoked the act if the ventilators won't be needed, he said that he thought there is a good chance there'll be enough and that if there ends up being a surplus, the ventilators could be sent to other countries.

GENERAL MOTORS

TRUMP, asserting he got immediate results from GM after invoking the Defense Production Act: "Those

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companies have come into line. They're doing a great job. They're working very hard ... around the clock. ... And, by the way, General Motors is doing a fantastic job. I don't think we have to worry about General Motors now." — news briefing Sunday.

THE FACTS: Trump's action didn't spur dramatic transformation by GM. The automaker has been moving rapidly, fronting millions in capital, and says it's still proceeding on the same course.

GM had expected to start making ventilators in mid-April, increasing to a rate of 10,000 per month as quickly as it can, in partnership with Ventec Life Systems, a small Seattle-area ventilator maker.

GM got into the ventilator business March 18 — before Trump's order on March 27 — after being approached by a coalition of CEOs trying to organize companies to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak. The organization introduced GM to Ventec, which makes small portable ventilators in Bothell, Washington.

GM pulled together manufacturing experts, engineers and purchasing specialists, and the next day had people at Ventec's facility. A few days later, GM assigned more engineers and purchasing experts to figure out how it could make Ventec's machines and help round out parts supplies.

TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

TRUMP: "I stopped some very, very infected, very, very sick people, thousands coming in from China long earlier than anybody thought, including the experts. Nobody thought we should do it except me. And I stopped everybody. We stopped it cold." — interview with "Fox & Friends."

THE FACTS: He didn't "stop cold" all the people infected with coronavirus from entering the U.S.; there were gaps in containment and initial delays in testing, leading to the U.S. rising last week to No. 1 globally in the number of people infected by COVID-19.

Nor did Trump decide on his own to impose travel restrictions on China — he followed a consensus recommendation by his public health advisers.

His order in late January temporarily barred entry by foreign nationals who had traveled in China within the previous 14 days, with exceptions for the immediate family of U.S. citizens and permanent residents. Americans returning from China were allowed back for two more weeks. They were given enhanced screenings. But screenings can miss people who are carrying the virus but showing no symptoms.

VIRUS TESTING

TRUMP: "We inherited a broken test — the whole thing was broken. And we rebuilt it." — interview Monday with "Fox & Friends."

TRUMP: "This administration inherited a broken system, a system that was obsolete, a system that didn't work. It was OK for a tiny, small group of people, but once you got beyond that, it didn't work." — news briefing Monday.

THE FACTS: Trump appears to be repeating a false accusation that a restrictive policy introduced by the Obama administration hampered initial testing during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Food and Drug Administration guidance drafted in 2014 called for tighter regulation of laboratory-developed tests, a market traditionally not overseen by the agency. Trump says that step made it more difficult to come out with a coronavirus test. But that guidance never took effect. And if it had, it would not have applied to public health emergencies like the current one.

The Trump administration's action in early March instead undid a policy that its own FDA put in place. That action let labs run by companies, universities and hospitals develop and use coronavirus diagnostic tests before the agency reviews them, speeding up the supply. Previously, the FDA had only authorized use of a government test developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The CDC in January developed a test kit and sent it to state and county public health labs, so they could test more people. But most of those kits proved to be faulty, delaying diagnosis of many people who unwittingly spread the disease.

TRUMP, on why he thinks South Korea does more COVID-19 testing per capita than the U.S.: "I know South Korea better than anybody. It's a — very tight. Do you know how many people are in Seoul? Do

you know how big the city of Seoul is? Thirty-eight million people.” — news briefing Monday.

THE FACTS: That’s wrong. The city of Seoul has a population of 10 million. Seoul’s greater metropolitan area is home to 25 million people, still far from Trump’s assertion of 38 million. South Korea’s population is 51 million.

Associated Press writers Matthew Perrone in Washington, Tom Krisher in Detroit, Alan Suderman in Richmond, Va., and Amanda Seitz in Chicago contributed to this report.

EDITOR’S NOTE — A look at the veracity of claims by political figures.

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Watchdog finds new problems with FBI wiretap applications

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department inspector general has found additional failures in the FBI’s handling of a secretive surveillance program that came under scrutiny after the Russia investigation, identifying problems with dozens of applications for wiretaps in national security investigations.

The audit results, announced Tuesday by Inspector General Michael Horowitz, suggest that FBI errors while eavesdropping on suspected spies and terrorists extend far beyond those made during the investigation into ties between Russia and the 2016 Trump campaign. They come as the FBI has scrambled to repair public confidence in how it uses its surveillance powers and as lawmakers uneasy about potential abuses have allowed certain of its tools to at least temporarily expire.

The new findings are on top of problems identified last year by the watchdog office, which concluded that the FBI had made significant errors and omissions in applications to eavesdrop on former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page during the early months of the Russia investigation. Those mistakes prompted internal changes within the FBI and spurred a congressional debate over whether the bureau’s surveillance tools should be reined in.

After the Russia report was submitted last December, Horowitz announced a broader audit of the FBI’s spy powers and the accuracy of its applications before the secretive Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court.

The watchdog office selected for review a subset of applications in both counterterrorism and counter-intelligence investigations covering the period from October 2014 to September 2019. It found problems in each of the more than two dozen applications it reviewed, including “apparent errors or inadequately supported facts.”

The audit examined how well the FBI was complying with internal rules that require agents to maintain a file of supporting documentation for every factual assertion they make in an application. Those rules, or “Woods Procedures,” were developed in 2001 with a goal of minimizing errors in the surveillance applications, known by the acronym FISA.

Horowitz said in a letter to FBI Director Chris Wray that in four of the 29 FISA applications his office selected for review, the FBI could not locate any of the supporting documentation that was supposed to have been produced at the time the application was submitted.

Each of the 25 other applications it reviewed contained “apparent errors or inadequately supported facts,” the inspector general said. In those instances, the facts stated in the applications were either not backed up by any documentation or were inconsistent with the documentation.

The watchdog office said it found an average of about 20 issues per application, including one application with about 65 issues.

As a result, Horowitz wrote, “we do not have confidence that the FBI has executed its Woods Procedures in compliance with FBI policy, or that the process is working as it was intended to help achieve the ‘scrupulously accurate’ standard for FISA applications.”

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The inspector general's office did not make a judgment as to whether the mistakes it identified were "material" to the investigation or to the court's decision to authorize the wiretaps.

The office recommended that the FBI "perform a physical inventory" to ensure supporting documentation exists for every application in all pending investigations. It also recommended that the FBI examine the results of "past and future accuracy reviews" so that it can identify trends and patterns and develop better training for agents.

The FBI and Justice Department say they have begun making significant changes, including additional training and other safeguards meant to ensure the accuracy of surveillance applications.

In a response letter, FBI Associate Deputy Director Paul Abbate said the FBI agreed with the office's recommendations, and that the errors identified by the inspector general will be addressed by the more than 40 corrective actions that Wray ordered last year after the Russia probe report.

"As Director Wray has stressed, FISA is an indispensable tool to guard against national security threats, but we must ensure that these authorities are carefully exercised and that FISA applications are scrupulously accurate," Abbate wrote.

The Justice Department said in a statement that it welcomes the audit, and that it has "been hard at work" implementing the changes demanded by Wray. Attorney General William Barr has also instituted his own changes, including in the handling of politically sensitive investigations.

"The Department is committed to putting the Inspector General's recommendations into practice and to implementing reforms that will ensure that all FISA applications are complete and accurate," the statement said.

The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court was established in 1978 to receive applications from the FBI to eavesdrop on people it suspects of being agents of a foreign power, such as potential spies or terrorists. Critics have long complained about the opaque, one-sided nature of the application process, and longstanding calls to overhaul the system received a bipartisan push because of the errors identified during the FBI's investigation into ties between the Trump campaign and Russia.

The congressional debate tripped up FBI efforts to renew three surveillance provisions that expired this month, with lawmakers adjourning last week without agreeing on legislation that would renew the tools.

The Justice Department urged Congress on Tuesday to revive the provisions as it continues working toward broader reforms.

"No one was more appalled than the Attorney General at the way the FISA process was abused. This abuse resulted in one of the greatest political travesties in American history and should never happen again," Justice Department spokeswoman Kerri Kupec said in a statement.

"However," she added, "FISA remains a critical tool to ensuring the safety and security of the American people, particularly when it comes to fighting terrorism."

Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham, the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said he would ask Horowitz to appear before the panel to explain his findings.

Follow Eric Tucker on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/etuckerAP>

CNN's Cuomo, with coronavirus, completes show from basement

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A bleary-eyed Chris Cuomo, saying he wanted to be a cautionary tale for his audience, anchored his CNN show from his basement Tuesday after testing positive for the coronavirus.

Via remote link, he interviewed Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker, an emergency room nurse and CNN medical correspondent Dr. Sanjay Gupta, who expressed worry about one of Cuomo's symptoms.

"Brace yourself," Cuomo told viewers, "not for a hoax. But for the next few weeks of scary and painful realities. This is a fight. It's going to get worse. We're going to suffer."

Cuomo looked pale, his eyes watery and red-rimmed. He took a few deep breaths to compose himself. He repeated himself. Even Gupta said he didn't look good, and said he'd call later to talk about a tightness

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Cuomo was feeling in his chest.

The 49-year-old newsman, whose brother, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, has logged just as much television airtime lately with daily briefings on how the disease is affecting his state, said earlier that he knew it was a matter of time because of how often he was exposed to people. He said he's staying in the basement of his Long Island home to protect himself from his wife and children.

The New York governor, who appeared with his brother on CNN by remote link the night before, also used the personal story to warn others during his press briefing Tuesday. He noted that he had scolded Chris for having their 88-year-old mother, Matilda, visiting Chris' home two weeks ago.

"It's my family, it's your family, it's all of our families," he said. "This virus is so insidious, and we have to keep that in mind."

Chris Cuomo said he thought his mom would be safer at his house than in her New York City apartment, but his brother persuaded him to have her stay at his sister's place in Westchester County.

Some competitors, including Sean Hannity and Geraldo Rivera of Fox News Channel, and Joy Reid and Ali Velshi of MSNBC, sent best wishes to Cuomo through social media Tuesday.

He said he appreciated the sympathy from well-wishers but tried to deflect it.

"Hopefully, I'll be able to keep doing the show," he said. "But who knows?"

One of the most unsettling things about the disease, he said, is hearing from doctors that there really isn't much he can do now except "suck it up."

"The best medicine is not to get it — prevention," he said in a pre-show discussion with colleague Anderson Cooper.

Most people who get the virus have mild to moderate symptoms and recover. But for older people, and those with underlying medical conditions, the disease can be dangerous. More than 3,000 people have died in the U.S. alone.

Andrew Cuomo, 62, and the CNN anchor are sons of the late New York Gov. Mario Cuomo, and that teasing big brother-little brother dynamic often enlivens their appearances together. The governor called him his best friend.

"He is going to be fine," he said. "He's young, in good shape, strong — not as strong as he thinks he is, but he will be fine."

Chris got a measure of revenge Tuesday night, referring to his brother as "Captain Banana Hands."

'I heard the roar': Big earthquake hits Idaho

By REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — A large earthquake struck north of Boise Tuesday evening, with people across a large area reporting shaking.

The U.S. Geological Survey reports the magnitude 6.5 temblor struck just before 6 p.m. It was centered 73 miles (118 kilometers) northeast of Meridian, near the rural mountain town of Stanley. There were no immediate reports of damage or injuries.

More than 2 million live in the region that could feel the Idaho quake, according to the USGS, with reports of shaking coming in from as far away as Helena, Montana, and Salt Lake City, Utah.

Marcus Smith, an emergency room health unit coordinator at St. Luke's Wood River Medical Center, said the hospital, about 65 miles (104 kilometers) south of the epicenter, shook but the quake didn't interfere with the treatment of any patients. The hospital in Blaine County is on the front line of Idaho's coronavirus outbreak, in a region with the nation's highest per-capita rates of known COVID-19 cases outside of New York City and its surrounding counties.

"It felt like a wave going through the ground, so I knew right away what it was. It just felt like waves going through the ground," he said.

The earthquake added stress during an already tense time for the region, but Smith said everything seemed fine, for now. "Until the next one, I guess," Smith said. "I mean, that's what we do. We're all good."

Brett Woolley, the owner of Bridge Street Grill in Stanley, said he heard the earthquake coming before

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he felt it.

"I heard the roar, and at first it sounded like the wind but then the roar was tremendous," Woolley said about 10 minutes after the earthquake. "The whole house was rattling, and I started to panic. I'm sitting here perfectly still and the water next to me is still vibrating."

Dr. Lucy Jones, a seismologist at Caltech and the founder of the Dr. Lucy Jones Center for Science and Seismology, said the Idaho region has an earthquake of about this size every 30 or 40 years. The most recent one, a magnitude 7.0 earthquake near Borah Peak in 1983, killed two children in Challis and caused an estimated \$12.5 million in property damage across Challis and Mackay.

That quake was along what scientists call a "normal fault," with the quake causing vertical movement, she said. Tuesday's quake appeared to be on an unmapped "strike-slip fault," causing mostly horizontal movement along the fault line.

"This is one that wasn't obvious enough to be mapped before now," Jones said.

Unmapped faults of this size are rarer in highly populated areas like California, she said, but in sparsely populated and remote regions like central Idaho they're less likely to cause damage and less likely to be a focus of geologists and seismologists.

Residents in the region will likely continue to feel aftershocks, she said. The area had already recorded five aftershocks within the first hours after the 6.5 earthquake.

"An aftershock is just an earthquake, but it happens at a time that doesn't surprise us," she said. "They do every bit as much damage."

People in an earthquake should drop to the floor and cover their heads with their arms, she said.

"Get to the floor before the earthquake throws you there, and if you have a table nearby, get under it and hold onto it," Jones said. "Running in an earthquake is incredibly dangerous — people die from running in an earthquake. Just get down and try to cover."

This story has been corrected to show the temblor struck just before 6 p.m.

Associated Press writer Lisa Baumann in Seattle contributed to this report.

Help heads to NYC as experts predict over 100,000 US deaths

By COLLEEN LONG, KAREN MATTHEWS and DAVID RISING Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — With refrigerated morgue trucks parked on New York City's streets to collect the surging number of dead, public health officials projected Tuesday that the coronavirus could ultimately kill more than 100,000 people across the U.S. Some states that have become hot spots warn they're running low on ventilators, while two cruise ships pleaded for Florida to allow them to dock to carry off the sick and dead.

The number of U.S. deaths could range from 100,000 to 240,000 even if Americans continue to stay home and limit contact with others, experts predicted at a media briefing with President Donald Trump. But they said they hope the figure won't soar that high if everyone does their part to prevent the virus from spreading.

"I want every American to be prepared for the hard days that lie ahead," said Trump, who has extended social distancing guidelines to April 30. "We're going to go through a very tough two weeks."

Elsewhere around the world, hard-hit Italy reported that the infection rate appears to be leveling off and new cases could start declining, but that the crisis is far from over. Spain struggled to fend off the collapse of its hospital system. Vladimir Putin's Russia moved to crack down on quarantine violations and "fake news" about the outbreak. And China edged closer to normal as stores in the epicenter city of Wuhan began reopening.

Worldwide, more than 850,000 people have been infected and over 42,000 have died, according to a tally kept by Johns Hopkins University. Italy and Spain accounted for half the deaths, while the U.S. had over 185,000 infections and more than 3,800 dead. That's above the official toll of about 3,300 in China,

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where the virus began.

New York was the nation's deadliest hot spot, with about 1,550 deaths statewide, most of them in New York City, which braced for things to get much worse in the coming weeks.

At Elmhurst Hospital in Queens, critically ill COVID-19 patients are filling intensive care units, surgical floors and operating rooms and waiting in the emergency room for beds to become available, said Dr. Eric Wei of the city's hospital agency.

"I've practiced emergency medicine for a long time, and I'm seeing things that I never could have imagined in terms of the things this virus can do to all ages, including people who were previously healthy," he said.

A 1,000-bed emergency hospital set up at the mammoth Javits Convention Center began taking non-coronavirus patients to help relieve the city's overwhelmed health system. A Navy hospital ship with 1,000 beds was expected to accept patients soon.

The indoor tennis center that is the site of the U.S. Open tournament is being turned into a hospital as well.

The city worked to bring in 250 out-of-town ambulances and 500 paramedics to deal with a crush of emergency calls. The fire commissioner said ambulances are responding to double their normal daily total of 3,000 calls to 911.

New York authorities also sought more volunteer health care professionals and hoped to have them on board by Thursday. Nearly 80,000 former nurses, doctors and others are said to be stepping forward.

Around the city, workers in protective gear have been seen putting bodies of victims into refrigerated trailers. At some hospitals, like Lenox Hill in Manhattan, the trucks are parked on the streets, along sidewalks and in front of apartments. Cars and buses passed by as corpses were loaded by forklift at Brooklyn Hospital Center. People captured some of the scenes by cellphone.

Meanwhile, two ships carrying passengers and crew from an ill-fated South American cruise are urging Florida officials to let them dock. Dozens aboard have reported flu-like symptoms, and four people have died. Two of the deaths have been blamed on COVID-19, and nine people have tested positive.

Gov. Ron DeSantis says Florida's health care resources are already stretched too thin. Trump said he would speak with DeSantis and "do what's right."

Figures on deaths and infections around the world are supplied by government health authorities and compiled by Johns Hopkins.

But the numbers are regarded with skepticism by public health experts because of different counting practices, a lack of testing in places, the numerous mild cases that have been missed, and perhaps government efforts to downplay the severity of the crisis.

For example, in Italy, where the death toll was put at about 12,400, the country's emergency coordinator, Domenico Arcuri, acknowledged that officials don't have a handle on how many people are dying at home or in nursing homes.

Still, there was a glimmer of hope there: Dr. Silvio Brusaferro, head of Italy's institutes of health, said that three weeks into a nationwide lockdown, the hardest-hit country in Europe is seeing the rate of new infections level off.

"The curve suggests we are at the plateau," he said. But "arriving at the plateau doesn't mean we have conquered the peak and we're done. It means now we should start to see the decline if we continue to place maximum attention on what we do every day."

With the country's health care system buckling under the pressure, a field hospital, built in just 10 days, was unveiled at the Milan fairgrounds.

"We made a promise and we kept it," said the head of the project, former civil protection chief Guido Bertolaso, who ended up catching the virus while on the job and had to work from his hospital bed.

In Russia, lawmakers approved harsher punishments, including prison sentences of several years, for violating quarantine rules and spreading misinformation. The chief doctor at Moscow's top hospital for coronavirus patients said he tested positive, a week after shaking hands with Putin.

Spain reported more than 840 new deaths, pushing the toll above 8,000 and forcing Madrid to open a

second temporary morgue after an ice rink pressed into service last week became overwhelmed.

Dozens of hotels across Spain have been turned into recovery rooms, and authorities are building field hospitals in sports centers, libraries and exhibition halls.

Israel's Defense Ministry said it has converted a missile-production facility into an assembly line for ventilators.

The hot spots of Louisiana and Michigan were running out of ventilators, despite promises by the White House of more equipment.

Louisiana's governor said the hard-hit New Orleans region is on track to run out of breathing machines by the weekend and hospital beds a week later. The Trump administration has committed to sending 150 ventilators from the national stockpile, but the state hasn't received an arrival date. Michigan said it needs 5,000 to 10,000 more.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for others, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause severe symptoms like pneumonia.

Among the few positive signs: In Britain, where the number of dead reached nearly 1,800, the medical director of the National Health Service's operations in England said there is evidence that social distancing is working. And China reported just one new death from the coronavirus and 48 new cases, all of them from overseas.

Rising contributed from Berlin, Long from Washington. Associated Press writers around the world contributed.

Follow AP news coverage of the coronavirus pandemic at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

Too little too late? Experts decry Mexico virus policy delay

By **MARÍA VERZA** and **CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN** Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico has started taking tougher measures against the coronavirus after weeks of its president hugging followers and saying religious medals would protect him. Some experts warn the sprawling country of 129 million is acting too late and testing too little to prevent the type of crisis unfolding across the border in the United States.

Last week Mexico banned non-essential government work as confirmed cases climbed, but took until late Monday to extend that to other business sectors and to bar gatherings of more than 50 people. By Tuesday, Mexico had reported more than 1,200 confirmed cases and at least 29 deaths.

Experts say those figures greatly understate the true number of infections. Mexico has done far less testing than many other countries — around 10,000 tests. New York state alone had performed more than 205,000 tests by Tuesday. There were also signs the disease may be far more advanced in Mexico than the limited testing shows — three state governors have already tested positive for coronavirus.

"Politics is very, very much involved in the decision-making going on right now," said Janine Ramsey, an infectious disease expert who works for Mexico's National Public Health Institute, a federal research agency, and has spent 35 years of her public health career in Mexico.

"Mexico, politically, does not value scientific evidence. Why? Because it takes decision-making away from the politicians," Ramsey said.

"For most of us, especially those of us who work with infectious pathogens, there is absolutely no excuse not to test because you cannot predict a) the response, b) the velocity of transmission, or c) the vulnerability of people" to becoming infected or to infecting others, she said.

"February and March is when we should have been testing everybody."

Dr. Joseph Eisenberg, chair of the Epidemiology Department at the University of Michigan's School of Public Health, agreed. "Testing is really our eyes, otherwise we're kind of blind," he said.

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"The only way you can really understand where the disease is and where you really need to focus your energies with respect to control is to be able to know where the infections are. And the only way to know that is through testing."

The Mexican government has defended its policies, saying that its robust health surveillance system gives it a good idea of how the epidemic is evolving and that health experts are charting the country's fight against the virus. It's focus now, it says, is keeping people at home to avoid a rapid spread that would quickly overwhelm the health care system.

"We're making an energetic, emphatic, unmistakable call: Stay at home," said Hugo López-Gatell, the government's coronavirus spokesman. "It's urgent, it's our last opportunity to do it, and do it now."

Still, despite some tougher measures by Mexican states that have imposed quarantines enforced by police, the federal call to stay home remains voluntary with no talk of penalties.

And although Mexico and the U.S. agreed earlier this month to restrict traffic at their shared border, the ban applies only to people who cross for tourism, recreation or other non-essential activity. Mexican border communities have complained that Mexico was not restricting anyone from entering, and residents in one city even blocked the border crossing with their vehicles to try to stop traffic from the U.S.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has maintained a relaxed public attitude despite the increasing alarm sounded by his health officials. He flew commercial to the western state of Sinaloa on Sunday, where he shook hands with residents, including the mother of convicted drug lord Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán Loera.

"Coronavirus isn't the plague," the president declared in a video message on social media. And although he has met with people diagnosed weeks later with the virus, he hasn't been tested because he hasn't experienced symptoms, his spokesman said.

Some experts bemoaned the mixed messages.

"Ideally we'd see all public figures taking the actions that health authorities are calling for," said Mauricio Rodríguez, a professor of medicine and spokesman for the coronavirus commission of the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

The measures announced Monday are "too late" said Dr. Miguel Betancourt, president of the Mexican Society of Public Health. Those moves should have come two weeks earlier when the curve of infections began to steepen.

"We still have time to avoid an outbreak that grows out of control but we all have to do our part," he said.

While for most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, for others, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can lead to severe symptoms like pneumonia.

Despite the government calls to stay home, many said they couldn't comply because like more than half of Mexicans, if they don't work, they don't eat.

"What other option are they offering?" asked Susana Ruiz, who was selling vegetables in a market in northern Mexico City over the weekend.

Others said the government didn't appear to think coronavirus was a grave threat to Mexico.

"If this virus were so dangerous, I think they would have already closed the metro," said Esperanza Rivas, a 50-year-old resident of the capital, where street markets and public transportation remain open.

And many are taking their cues from the president himself, who had this to say at a news conference Tuesday: "Soon, very soon there's going to be the day of hugs and kisses in all the public plazas."

"We're going to hug because we're going to overcome this coronavirus crisis and the economic crisis and the social welfare crisis," he said.

AP videojournalist Diego Delgado contributed to this report.

White House projects 100K to 240K US deaths from virus

By AAMER MADHANI, KEVIN FREKING and RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Tuesday warned Americans to brace for a “hell of a bad two weeks” ahead as the White House projected there could be 100,000 to 240,000 deaths in the U.S. from the coronavirus pandemic even if current social distancing guidelines are maintained.

Public health officials stressed that the number could be less if people across the country bear down on keeping their distance from one another.

“We really believe we can do a lot better than that,” said Dr. Deborah Birx, the coordinator of the White House coronavirus task force. That would require all Americans to take seriously their role in preventing the spread of disease, she said.

Added Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government’s top infectious disease expert, “This is a number that we need to anticipate, but we don’t necessarily have to accept it as being inevitable.”

Trump called it “a matter of life and death” for Americans to heed his administration’s guidelines and predicted the country would soon see a “light at the end of the tunnel” in a pandemic that has killed more than 3,500 Americans and infected 170,000 more.

“I want every American to be prepared for the hard days that lie ahead,” Trump said.

“This is going to be one of the roughest two or three weeks we’ve ever had in our country,” Trump added. “We’re going to lose thousands of people.”

The jaw-dropping projections were laid out during a grim, two-hour White House briefing. Officials described a death toll that in a best-case scenario would likely be greater than the more than 53,000 American lives lost during World War I. And the model’s high end neared the realm of possibility that Americans lost to the virus could approach the 291,000 Americans killed on the battlefield during World II.

“There’s no magic bullet,” Birx said. “There’s no magic vaccine or therapy. It’s just behaviors. Each of our behaviors, translating into something that changes the course of this viral pandemic.”

Fauci called the numbers “sobering” and urged Americans to “step on the accelerator” with their collective mitigation efforts.

“We are continuing to see things go up,” Fauci said. “We cannot be discouraged by that because the mitigation is actually working and will work.”

Birx said pandemic forecasts initially predicted 1.5 million to 2.2 million deaths in the U.S. But that was a worst-case scenario, without efforts to slow the spread of the coronavirus through social distancing. She added that states that have not yet seen a spike in cases as New York has could take action to flatten the curve of rising hospitalizations and deaths.

It’s not only social distancing that could make a difference, but also the frantic efforts by hospitals around the country to prepare for an onslaught of seriously ill patients. The better prepared hospitals are, the greater the chances of lives being saved.

There’s also a wild card when it comes to treatment: whether the experimental drug combination Trump has touted — a medicine for malaria and an antibiotic — will actually make a difference. That combination is already being used on thousands of patients, and Fauci said he would want to see a rigorous test of its effectiveness.

Trump’s comments came after he announced Sunday that he was extending to April 30 the social distancing guidelines that advise Americans to cease large gatherings, work from home, suspend onsite learning at schools and more in a nationwide effort to stem the spread of the virus.

It was an abrupt reversal for Trump, who spent much of last week targeting April 12 as the day he wanted to see Americans “pack the pews” for Easter Sunday services.

Trump called the data “very sobering,” saying it was his understanding that 100,000 deaths was a minimum that would be difficult to avoid. He also sought to rewrite his past minimization of the outbreak, saying he rejected those who compared the new coronavirus to the flu — when in fact he repeatedly did so publicly.

“This could be hell of a bad two weeks,” Trump said. He added: “You know 100,000 is, according to

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modeling, a very low number. In fact, when I first saw the number ... they said it was unlikely you'll be able to attain that. We have to see but I think we're doing better than that."

Trump played down concerns from New York's Andrew Cuomo and other governors that their states' hospitals don't have enough ventilators to treat an anticipated crush of patients. Trump said the federal government currently has a stockpile of 10,000 ventilators that it plans on distributing as needed.

"Now, when the surge occurs, if it occurs fairly evenly, we'll be able to distribute them very quickly before they need them," Trump said. "But we want to have a reserve right now. It's like having oil reserves."

Birx said the experiences of Washington state and California give her hope that other states can keep the coronavirus under control through social distancing. That's because they moved quickly to contain the early clusters of coronavirus by closing schools, urging people to work from home, banning large gatherings and taking other measures now familiar to most Americans, she noted.

"I am reassured by looking at the Seattle line," she added. "California and Washington state reacted very early to this." Many other states and local governments already have stiff controls in place on mobility and gatherings.

Trump said he would also ask Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis to allow the docking of two cruise ships with passengers who have had contact with patients suffering from COVID-19. Passengers are anxious to disembark once they reach Florida, but DeSantis said the state's health care resources are already stretched too thin to take on a ship's coronavirus caseload.

"They're dying on the ship," Trump said. "I'm going to do what's right, not only for us but for humanity."

Trump also said he planned to curtail his travel for the month ahead and stay close to the White House to safeguard his health. The president hasn't held one of his signature big-stadium rallies since early March, and it's unlikely he'll be holding another one anytime soon.

"I think it's important that I remain healthy. I really do," Trump said. "So for the most part we're staying here."

Trump spoke after another troubling day for the stock market, which has been in a free fall as the coronavirus ground the economy to a near-halt and left millions unemployed. The Dow Jones Industrial Average plunged more than 400 points, or roughly 1.9%, to seal the worst first-quarter finish of its 135-year history.

Should you wear mask in public if not sick with coronavirus?

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — If you're not sick with the new coronavirus, should you wear a mask in public? Global health authorities say no. Amid a shortage of masks, the U.S. is sticking with that advice but Tuesday, President Donald Trump suggested people who are worried wear a scarf.

That shortage is so severe that the Joint Commission, which accredits U.S. hospitals, said Tuesday that if facilities can't provide proper masks, health workers are allowed to bring their own from home.

Front-line health workers have the greatest need for masks. And when people are sick, wearing a mask helps lessen the chances of infecting others. In places where relatives care for the sick at home, the World Health Organization also has recommended they wear a mask.

But "there is no specific evidence to suggest that the wearing of masks by the mass population has any particular benefit," Dr. Mike Ryan, the WHO's epidemics chief, told reporters Monday.

"In fact, there's some evidence to suggest the opposite," he added, noting risks from an improperly fitted mask or touching the face while taking it off or putting it on.

For months as the COVID-19 crisis grew and masks disappeared from store shelves, U.S. health officials have agreed. The virus is believed to spread mostly through droplets from coughs or sneezes, and thus the main advice has been to keep your distance — staying 6 feet away — in addition to frequent hand-washing and not touching your face. Health workers who may be doing procedures that generate tinier particles are supposed to get high priority for tight-fitting filtering masks.

"Seriously people - STOP BUYING MASKS!" Surgeon General Jerome Adams wrote in a February 29 tweet. "They are not effective in preventing general public from catching #Coronavirus but if healthcare

providers can't get them to care for sick patients, it puts them and our communities at risk."

But mask-wearing has long been common in some countries during respiratory outbreaks, especially in parts of Asia. As questions grow about whether people sometimes can spread the virus before realizing they're sick -- which social distancing is supposed to address -- increasingly people ask what it would hurt to wear some form of mask in public.

Trump said Tuesday that his scientific advisers made clear the general public shouldn't be competing with hospitals and health workers for scarce masks of any type.

His solution: "Use a scarf if you want," Trump said at the daily White House briefing. "It doesn't have to be a mask. It's not a bad idea at least for a period of time."

Earlier in the day, Dr. Anthony Fauci, infectious disease chief at the U.S. National Institutes of Health, had told CNN that once there are enough masks, there might be "some very serious consideration" about broadening the mask recommendations.

For now, the advice posted on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website: "If you are NOT sick: You do not need to wear a face mask unless you are caring for someone who is sick (and they are not able to wear a face mask)."

AP reporter Mike Stobbe in New York contributed to this report.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

What you need to know today about the virus outbreak

By The Associated Press undefined

The U.S. death toll from the coronavirus climbed past 3,500 Tuesday, eclipsing China's official count. President Donald Trump warned Americans to brace for a "rough two-week period" as public health experts projected 100,000 to 240,000 people could die in the U.S. even if Americans follow social-distancing guidelines.

In hard-hit New York, the mammoth convention center started taking patients to ease the burden on the city's overwhelmed health system and the tennis center where the U.S. Open is held was being turned into a hospital.

There have been more than 850,000 global infections and more than 42,000 deaths worldwide.

Here are some of AP's top stories Tuesday on the world's coronavirus pandemic. Follow [APNews.com/VirusOutbreak](https://www.apnews.com/VirusOutbreak) for updates through the day and [APNews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak](https://www.apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak) for stories explaining some of its complexities.

WHAT'S HAPPENING TODAY:

— President Donald Trump warns Americans to brace for a "rough two-week period" ahead as the White House released new projections that there could be 100,000 to 240,000 deaths in the U.S. from the coronavirus pandemic even if current social distancing guidelines are maintained. Public health officials stressed the number could be less if people change their behavior.

—The Army Field Band's mission is bringing the military's story and music to the American people. And they're not letting the coronavirus get in the way. When the unit was recalled to Fort Meade, Maryland, amid the COVID-19 outbreak, members quickly set up a studio and began live-streaming daily concerts.

— The coronavirus pandemic has injected anxiety and uncertainty among pregnant women during an already stressful time and while science about risks is mostly reassuring, doctors want clearer answers, too.

— China's manufacturing rebounded in March as authorities relaxed anti-disease controls and allowed factories to reopen, an official survey showed Tuesday. But an industry group said the economy has yet to fully recover.

— As schools, workplaces and public services shut down in the age of coronavirus, online connections are keeping Americans in touch with vital institutions and each other. But that's not much of an option

when fast internet service is hard to come by.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia and death. The vast majority of people recover.

Here are the symptoms of the virus compared with the common flu.

One of the best ways to prevent spread of the virus is washing your hands with soap and water. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends first washing with warm or cold water and then lathering soap for 20 seconds to get it on the backs of hands, between fingers and under fingernails before rinsing off.

You should wash your phone, too. Here's how.

TRACKING THE VIRUS: Drill down and zoom in at the individual county level, and you can access numbers that will show you the situation where you are, and where loved ones or people you're worried about live.

ONE NUMBER:

— 479: The countdown clock is ticking again for the Tokyo Olympics. The digital model outside Tokyo Station was switched on almost immediately after organizers announced the new dates. They will now be held from July 23 to Aug. 8, 2021. The clock reads 479 days to go.

IN OTHER NEWS:

— A South Korean shoe cobbler plans to donate parts of his property to help support people facing economic difficulties.

— With trips to beloved salons and barbershops on hold because of the coronavirus, some are cutting new bangs, turning to over-the-counter color or picking up electric clippers and scissors to work on the heads of loved ones, while others are letting nature take its course.

— The reappearance of Wuhan's favorite breakfast noodles is a tasty sign that life is slowly getting back to normal in the Chinese city originally at the epicenter of the global coronavirus outbreak.

Follow AP coverage of the virus outbreak at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

Virus disrupts pregnancy plans, raises anxiety and questions

By LINDSEY TANNER AP Medical Writer

Some pregnant women fear giving birth with no loved ones by their side. Others worry about getting sick with COVID-19 and not being able to hold their newborns. The coronavirus pandemic has injected anxiety and uncertainty to an already stressful time and while science about risks is mostly reassuring, doctors want clearer answers too.

"There is very limited information available," said Dr. Leana Wen, a George Washington University public health specialist. She wants answers as a physician and as a patient — Wen is pregnant and due to give birth to her second child any day.

Her greatest fear is developing a COVID-19 infection or symptoms that would force her to be separated from her newborn for days or weeks.

"I would only be able to see my baby through a glass window," said Wen, former Baltimore health commissioner. "That's the one that gives me nightmares."

To help provide answers, the University of California, San Francisco last week started the first U.S. registry of COVID-19 infected or exposed pregnant women. At least 60 women have enrolled so far.

Not all have confirmed cases. Women who turn out not to be infected will remain in the registry as a comparison group.

The more women in the registry "the more quickly we can provide the answers," said Dr. Vanessa Ja-

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coby, who heads the effort.

The big questions include: Are pregnant women more likely than others to become infected and to develop complications? Preliminary evidence suggests no.

There is also no definitive evidence that the virus can be transmitted from mother to fetus during pregnancy, although three small and preliminary studies from China published last week raised that possibility. One paper in JAMA Pediatrics included 33 infants born to infected women; only three babies tested positive, two days after birth, and developed symptoms including pneumonia. All three recovered.

It's likely their mothers transmitted the disease during or after birth, not during pregnancy, said Dr. David Kimberlin, a pediatric infectious disease specialist at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

"The numbers are too small to make any conclusions" about how often infants become infected or how sick they become, Kimberlin said.

Guidance from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine says pregnant women with COVID-19 should be considered high-risk patients. That's because pregnant women who develop flu or other respiratory infections caused by related viruses face increased risks for complications from those illnesses, including premature births and certain birth defects. There are a few reports of babies born prematurely but there is no evidence that the coronavirus was the cause.

To limit the risk of infection, some doctors are doing prenatal checkups by phone or video conference. Some are implementing or considering limits on visitors in the delivery room. At some New York City hospitals, that meant no spouses or partners either, until the state said one person was allowed.

Federal recommendations say hospitals should consider separating infected mothers from newborns until the mother tests negative for the virus, but that is not a mandate, said Dr. Brenna Hughes, a Duke University specialist who helped write the obstetric groups' guidance.

Some pregnant women are seeking to have labor induced early to avoid hospitals during a possible surge of COVID-19 cases, and others are suddenly deciding to give birth at home. Mainstream medical groups advise against both.

"We believe that planned hospital birth is the safest option for pregnant women," Hughes said.

She added that for women who are planning to become pregnant, there's no specific advice against it during the pandemic.

Some hospitals are seeing pregnant women from out-of-state virus hotspots, who are seeking to give birth in a safer environment. These include Greenwich Hospital in Greenwich, Connecticut, 35 miles from New York City, and Tufts Medical Center, 200 miles away, in Boston.

Tufts is not accepting any routine OB/GYN transfers from any COVID-19 surge areas that advise against travel, said spokesman Jeremy Lechan. "If a pregnant patient from one of these areas shows up in the clinic, they will be asked to self-quarantine for 14 days before receiving care." Women in labor will be accepted but without anyone else.

Maureen Nicol, a single Columbia University doctoral student in early childhood education, will be giving birth to her first child out of state, not as planned. She expected to give birth in April at a Manhattan hospital with the assistance of a doula. But during a visit in March to her family's Maryland home, New York became the nation's coronavirus epicenter. She canceled plans to return.

Now she's racing to find a new doctor and hospital, buy new baby supplies, and considering the possibility of giving birth with her doula on the phone.

"I'm just wishing for a healthy and safe delivery," Nicol said. "And feeling I have some control in a time and situation where I feel like no one feels like they have control."

Follow AP Medical Writer Lindsey Tanner at @LindseyTanner.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Viral virus briefing: Where science meets all things Trump

By CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For a few moments in the Rose Garden, the coronavirus pandemic is a bucking bronco with President Donald Trump on its back. His arm swings an invisible rope. He seems to be hanging on for dear life.

"Ride it like a cowboy," he growls. "Just ride it. Ride that sucker right through."

This rodeo riff came during the daily White House coronavirus task force briefing, where science meets all things Trump.

It's where the teetotaling president serves a 5 o'clock cocktail of public-health policy, twisted facts, invented achievements, performance art, hectoring, cheerleading, erraticism, improvisation, self-praise, pet theories and a dash of eloquence. Shaken not stirred. Late in starting, finished when he feels like it.

The self-styled "wartime president" is, at least, a showtime president. He's enjoying the high ratings of his briefings and boasting they're up there with "The Bachelor." Meantime on the streets of the country, people are recoiling in the wake of each passing stranger's exhalation. In jammed hospitals, patients are fighting for life. The death toll arcs upward.

Still the show must go on.

Trump is the animated star of his production. Dr. Anthony Fauci is the stoic straight man, a venerated infectious disease scientist whose facial expressions are closely watched as if he is one oddball Trump remark away from losing it. He doesn't. But he's very tired on four hours of sleep.

Day after day, Trump free-associates, harangues reporters, assails critics and spreads misinformation on all aspects of the crisis, at times overshadowing the fact-based information that public health officials have come to deliver, in the moments when Trump steps aside to let them speak. It was here one day that Fauci broke ranks in Trump's presence to refute his claims about a drug treatment for COVID-19.

On this bright Sunday, the briefing was moved to the resplendent garden from the clammy confines of the press briefing room, a long-ago indoor swimming pool that still feels like one. With social-distancing signs posted on the backs of chairs, it has taken on the character of a hazmat zone. It gives literal meaning to the pandemic's cliché that we're all in this together.

Out in the garden, Trump shoos away gnats and begins in buoyant fashion. The news is going to turn dark but he will take his sweet time getting there.

"Beautiful day in the Rose Garden," he tells the press corps. "Tremendous distance between chairs. Social distancing. You practice it very well. We appreciate it. That's great."

Next up is word about a coming diagnostic test, almost instant, he says, and you don't have to get a swab shoved so far up your nose like he did when he submitted to a virus test a few weeks back. He's complained about it ever since. The new test is so easy that he said he just might get another one.

Executives step up to say what their companies are doing about producing and shipping critical medical supplies. Praise for Trump's leadership is standard in their brief remarks. This is a president who wants a public display of appreciation and has said he may not call people back if he doesn't get that.

We hear some basics about the world: "Think of it: 151 countries. Somebody said to me today ... they didn't know that we had that many countries. A hundred and fifty-one countries. That's something."

We hear a series of unverified statements: about an unidentified New York hospital he's been told is hoarding masks, an uncorroborated theory that the fatality rate in the U.S. is lower than in other countries, his conviction that the speedy new tests will be "a whole new ballgame."

He trots out the rhetorical bronco, saying some aides wanted him to just hang on and ride it out until the crisis passed but he felt he should do more.

Trump's doggedly positive spin, evident for several months, begins to fray when he announces a month-long extension of social distancing guidelines that were to expire Monday.

"The better you do," he says of distancing, "the faster this whole nightmare will end."

This whole nightmare.

As the briefing slips into its second hour, it becomes apparent that Trump is conditioning Americans to

expect far more deaths from COVID-19 than anyone would think from his history of minimizing the crisis. Gone is the talk about the virus maybe going away like magic in the warmth of spring.

Fauci and other public-health authorities had told him 100,000 to 200,000 people could die in this country from the virus if not enough is done to mitigate the pandemic.

The president then invokes a far grimmer number, 2.2 million, an estimated death toll if no steps were taken to fight the pandemic, and summons Dr. Deborah Birx of the task force to explain it.

Why introduce an even starker scenario than the already scary one?

Because if 100,000 to 200,000 end up dying, Trump still wants history — and voters in the fall — to judge his effort a success. If the toll is in that range, he says, “We all, together, have done a very good job.”

Behind such bravado, though, is a president seeing the pandemic — “the viciousness of it” — in increasingly personal and sober terms. “A lot of people are dying,” he says, “so it’s very unpleasant.”

He says a friend, “a little older, and he’s heavy, but he’s a tough person,” landed in a hospital. “I call: ‘How’s he doing?’ ‘Sir, he’s in a coma. He’s unconscious.’ He’s not doing well.”

He speaks at length of body bags and “freezer trucks” he’s seen on TV taking the dead from Elmhurst Hospital in Queens. The building is so familiar from his New York childhood that “I can tell you the color on the outside, the size of the windows. I mean, I know it very well, right?”

“I’ve seen things that I’ve never seen before. I mean, I’ve seen them, but I’ve seen them on television in faraway lands. I’ve never seen them in our country.”

The sun is slanting low in the garden as Trump brings this briefing to a close.

“I want our life back again,” he says.

“I want our country back.

“I want the world back.

“I want the world to get rid of this.”

Associated Press writers Zeke Miller and Jill Colvin contributed to this report.

Hospitals overflowing with bodies in US epicenter of virus

By **ROBERT BUMSTED** and **MICHAEL R. SISAK** Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — It has become a grim ritual outside New York City’s hospitals: workers in protective gear loading the bodies of coronavirus victims into refrigerated trailers.

A surge in deaths in the epicenter of the crisis in the U.S. has overwhelmed the city’s permanent morgues and filled storage spaces in many hospitals to capacity. The Federal Emergency Management Agency is sending 85 refrigerated trucks to serve as temporary morgues, the city said.

It’s been that way for days at Brooklyn Hospital Center, where a worker Tuesday wheeled out a gurney carrying a body covered in white plastic, a forklift operator carefully raised a body into the trailer and undertakers came to claim the remains of yet another of the city’s nearly 1,000 coronavirus dead.

The hospital said in a statement that the “unprecedented crisis calls for extraordinary measures” and that extra storage is needed “to accommodate the tragic spike in deaths, placing a strain on the entire system of care — from hospitals to funeral homes.”

“Grieving families cannot quickly make arrangements, and their loved ones who have passed are remaining in hospitals longer, thus the need for this accommodation,” the hospital in Brooklyn’s Fort Greene neighborhood said.

The city’s medical examiner’s office has also started operating a makeshift morgue, as it did after the Sept. 11 attacks, to provide emergency capacity as the city’s permanent facilities fill up.

The city’s coronavirus death toll more than doubled in the past four days, surging from 450 on Friday to 932 as of Tuesday morning.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for others, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, the virus can cause severe symptoms like pneumonia and can be fatal.

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The city and FEMA have delivered refrigerated trucks to various hospitals, while the Office of Chief Medical Examiner has been guiding them on how to properly move and store bodies, officials said.

"To see the scenes of trailers out there and what they're doing with those trailers — they're freezers, and nobody can even believe it," President Donald Trump said Tuesday.

At some hospitals, like Lenox Hill in Manhattan, the trailers are being parked on city streets, along sidewalks and in front of apartments. Cars and buses passed by as bodies were loaded Tuesday outside Brooklyn Hospital Center.

Cellphone videos posted on social media over the weekend drew attention to hospitals using trailers to store bodies. An image from one video of the activity outside Brooklyn Hospital Center appeared on the front page of Tuesday's New York Post.

"It's hard to believe this, but this is for real," said the man shooting the video, his voice quaking. "Lord have mercy, help us Lord, this is for real."

Ex-wildlife chief: Trump rule could kill billions of birds

By **AMY BETH HANSON** and **MATTHEW BROWN** Associated Press

BUTTE, Mont. (AP) — At a former open pit copper mine filled with billions of gallons of toxic water, sirens and loud pops from propane cannons echo off the granite walls to scare away birds so they don't land.

After several thousand migrating snow geese perished in the Berkeley Pit's acidic, metal-laden waters in 2016, its owners deployed a sophisticated arsenal to frighten away flocks, including lasers, drones, fireworks and remote-controlled boats.

Montana Resources already had been hazing incoming birds with spotlights and rifle shots into the water — and a spokesman says those existing deterrents likely helped the company avoid a penalty or prosecution under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

But the Trump administration wants to end the 50-year practice of using the criminal penalties under the migratory bird law to pressure companies into taking measures like these to prevent unintentional bird deaths.

Critics— including top Interior Department officials from Republican and Democratic administrations — say the proposed change could devastate threatened and endangered species and accelerate a bird population decline across North America since the 1970s.

Former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe told The Associated Press the law's threat of prosecution served as "a brake on industry" that had saved probably billions of birds.

"Removing that obligation, if it stands, over the next several decades will result in billions of birds being casualties," said Ashe, who served in the Obama administration. "It will be catastrophic."

Industry sources kill an estimated 450 million to 1.1 billion birds annually, out of an overall 7.2 billion birds in North America, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and recent studies.

The Trump administration dismissed Ashe's dire prediction, contending companies will continue to avoid bird deaths voluntarily.

At the Berkeley Pit, Montana Resources plans to keep up efforts that drive away almost all birds, in part to avoid a repeat of the negative publicity and community backlash that followed the 2016 bird kill, according to Mark Thompson, the manager of environmental affairs.

"We as a company see it as an essential environmental protection," Thompson said.

The 1918 migratory bird law came after many U.S. bird populations had been decimated by hunting and poaching, much of it for feathers for women's hats. Over the past half-century, the law also was applied against companies that failed to prevent foreseeable bird deaths.

However, the Trump administration says deaths of birds that fly into oil pits, mining sites, telecommunications towers, wind turbines and other hazards should be treated as accidents not subject to prosecution. And an Interior Department proposal would cement that into federal regulation.

State officials and wildlife advocates who are suing the administration in federal court say birds already are being harmed under actions allowed by a 2017 Trump administration legal memo that signaled the

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rule change.

Most notable was the destruction last fall of nesting grounds for 25,000 shorebirds in Virginia to make way for a road and tunnel project. State officials had ended conservation measures for the birds after federal officials advised such measures were voluntary under the new interpretation of the law.

The move to relax the bird law, combined with Trump rollbacks of the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act puts birds and their habitat at greater risk, said Audubon Society vice president Sarah Greenberger.

The Trump administration proposal follows longstanding pressure from oil companies, utilities and other industries.

The Edison Electric Institute, which represents many U.S. utilities, contends it would be "absurd" to criminalize "ordinary, everyday activities" that happen to result in a bird death, which can result in up to six months in prison and a \$15,000 penalty for every bird injured or killed.

The American Petroleum Institute suggested in a regulatory filing that "The birds themselves are the actors, colliding or otherwise interacting with industrial structures."

More than 1,000 types of birds are covered by the law, from water birds such as ducks and pelicans, to woodpeckers, songbirds, hawks and owls.

Criminal enforcement of the law typically was used only as a last resort, according to current and former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officials.

The agency conducted 152 investigations into bird deaths across the U.S. over a five-year period ending Dec. 31, 2017, according to spokesman Gavin Shire. Most involved birds killed by power lines, which kill upward of 25 million birds annually, according to a 2014 government-sponsored study.

The number of investigations resulting in prosecutions was not available, Shire said.

"The goal was to generate voluntary compliance. You do that by educating people," said Gary Mowad, who served as deputy chief of enforcement during a 25-year-career with the agency. "We did a great job of keeping (bird) mortality in control. The only regulatory tool that the federal government had at its disposal to address that is now gone or will be gone."

The most notable enforcement case bought under the migratory bird act resulted in a \$100 million settlement by BP, after the Gulf of Mexico oil spill in 2010 killed approximately 100,000 birds.

Federal courts have been split on whether companies can be prosecuted, with appeals courts ruling in favor of industry three times and siding against companies twice.

At the Berkeley Pit, initial efforts to discourage birds from landing were prompted by deaths of 342 snow geese that landed in November, 1995.

Over the next two decades, an average of six birds per year were found dead in the pit, Thompson said.

"We quickly learned that warning shots from a high-powered rifle worked great and that pretty much carried us through 'til 2016," he said.

Then in November 2016 a huge, exhausted flock of snow geese that stayed at their summer grounds in Canada longer than unusual were forced quickly south by cold weather. They found the Berkeley Pit to be the only open water to escape a sudden snowstorm — and an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 of the birds that landed there died.

In response, Montana Resources dramatically ramped up its bird scare tactics and Thompson said it would keep up the efforts regardless of the Trump administration's actions, mirroring pledges from some other companies and industries.

Much of the attention over accidental bird deaths has focused on oil companies.

Kathleen Sgamma, president of the industry group Western Energy Alliance, said that estimates of as many as a million birds killed annually in oil pits are outdated because companies have shifted away from using open pits to store hazardous waste from drilling.

"The studies haven't caught up with the realities on the ground," Sgamma said.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service disputed Ashe's claim that billions more birds were at risk from the rule change and noted that most preventive measures already are voluntary ones.

"Without a scientific basis, any claim as to the number of birds that would be negatively affected would be speculative and irresponsible," Shire said in an emailed statement.

Ashe's estimate that billions of birds were at risk was supported by a leading ornithologist from Cornell University and two former senior officials with the Fish and Wildlife Service — Brad Bortner, who retired in 2017 from his post as chief of the migratory bird program, and Paul Schmidt, the agency's former assistant director.

"If we're talking about over decades, and a billion birds already are killed by industry annually, that does start really adding up pretty quickly," said Amanda Rodewald, co-director of Cornell's Center for Avian Population Studies. "We're talking about a scale of mortality that's substantial, that would be meaningful ecologically and biologically." —

Brown reported from Billings, Montana. This story was illustrated in collaboration with The Montana Standard.

Follow Matthew Brown on Twitter: @matthewbrownap and Amy Beth Hanson on Twitter: @amybethhanson

Amazon fires warehouse worker who staged walkout

By ALEXANDRA OLSON and MAE ANDERSON AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Amazon fired a worker who organized a walkout at a New York warehouse to demand greater protection against the new coronavirus, saying the employee himself flouted distancing rules and put others at risk.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio ordered the city's Commission of Human Right to investigate whether the dismissal was retaliatory. New York Attorney General Letitia James called on the National Labor Relations Board to investigate and said her office is also considering legal options.

"It is disgraceful that Amazon would terminate an employee who bravely stood up to protect himself and his colleagues," James said in a statement.

Amazon said the worker, Christian Smalls, received several warnings for violating social distancing guidelines. Amazon said Smalls showed up at the protest at the Staten Island warehouse Monday despite a order to remain home for 14 days with pay because he had come into contact with a co-worker who had been diagnosed with the virus.

But Smalls said his contact with the infected worker was limited and felt Amazon put him on leave to get him out of the way. He said he noticed the worker looked ill last Tuesday and encouraged the person in a brief conversation to go home.

Smalls said that Tuesday had been his first day back at work after more than a week because he had been using paid and unpaid time off to avoid going to a job where felt exposed to the virus.

After the worker tested positive, Smalls said he and others workers asked if the warehouse would be shut down for cleaning but were told it would stay open. After that, Smalls said he spent the rest of the week going to the warehouse without clocking in, instead spending each day in the break room leading protests.

"Everybody is scared. People are scared to lose their jobs. Who's their voice? I'm their voice. It cost me my job but so be it," Smalls said.

Amazon said a small fraction of the 5,000 workers work at the warehouse joined the walk-out. The company said it had asked "anyone who was in close contact with the diagnosed individual to stay home with pay" but did not specify how many.

The Seattle-based company said it has taken aggressive steps to protect its employees from the virus, including cleaning and distancing measures. Amazon is checking the temperature of anyone entering the Staten Island warehouse, a step the company said would be implemented in other facilities as soon as possible.

The company said it consults with local and federal health authorities on how to handle building closures if an employee tests positive, including evaluating the worker's interactions with others.

"We have taken extreme measures to keep people safe," Amazon said in a statement. "The truth is the

vast majority of employees continue to show up and do the heroic work of delivering for customers every day.”

Several walk-outs and protests have drawn attention to fear and discontent among low-wage workers on the front lines of the pandemic, particularly those packing and delivering groceries and other essentials for millions of people hunkering down at home.

A group of workers at Whole Foods, which is owned by Amazon, planned to stage a “sick out” Tuesday to demand hazard pay, immediate closure and cleaning of stores if a worker tests positive for the virus and health benefits for part-time and seasonal workers. It was unclear how widespread the protest was.

Whole Foods said the protest was being led by a “small but vocal group,” including many who don’t work for the company. In a statement, Whole Foods said the sick-out had “no operational impact” on its services.

Whole Foods said it offers workers up to two weeks of paid time off if they test positive for COVID-19 or are quarantined, an additional \$2 per hour on top of hourly base pay, and increased overtime pay. Amazon is also offering an additional \$2 per hour for its hourly workers.

Amazon is hiring 100,000 more workers to meet a surge in demand for deliveries, one of several companies that have announced such hiring sprees. Despite the hazards of the jobs, many people are applying as layoffs soar retail, restaurants, airlines and other industries.

Instacart, the San Francisco-based grocery delivery app, is hiring 300,000 more contracted workers, saying orders have surged 150% in recent weeks compared to last year. Some Instacart workers walked off the job Monday to demand hazard pay and more protective gear against the virus.

Associated Press writer Karen Matthews contributed to this story from New York.

Wuhan’s favorite noodles are back as virus-hit city recovers

By The Associated Press undefined

WUHAN, China (AP) — The noodles smothered in peanut sauce are as much a trademark of Wuhan as deep-dish pizza in Chicago or spaghetti in Rome. Zhou Guoqiong still isn’t allowed to serve customers inside her shop, but the stream of eager customers now lining up outside to take away those noodles testifies to the powerful desire to savor the familiar again after the easing of months of strict lockdown.

Despite radically falling numbers of coronavirus infections, officials emphasize that Wuhan and the rest of China still have a long way to go. But the reappearance of Wuhan’s favorite breakfast noodles is a tasty sign that life is slowly beginning to transition to normal in the Chinese city that served as the original epicenter of the global outbreak, first detected in December.

Five days after reopening, Zhou and her husband now sell several hundred bags of “reganmian,” or “hot dry noodles,” every day — less than before the outbreak, but more than enough to keep them busy.

“I’m happy as long as there is business,” Zhou said.

Wuhan has recorded 2,548 deaths from the coronavirus and reported more than 50,000 cases, and the city essentially shut down starting Jan. 23.

The head of the National Health Commission, Ma Xiaowei, said Tuesday that the “most dangerous, most critical stage” of the domestic outbreak appears to have passed. But he was insistent that strict quarantines on travelers and other restrictions such as school closures will be lifted only gradually and very, very carefully.

“At present, the epidemic situation in China is not over,” foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said at a daily briefing.

China says almost all of its coronavirus cases are now brought into the country by travelers from abroad, and Wuhan has not recorded any new confirmed or suspected cases in a week. Officials have said it must go a full 14 consecutive days without new cases before they lift draconian travel restrictions and social distancing demands.

That can’t come soon enough for Mr. Xiao, who runs a small butcher shop and tries to be guardedly optimistic about the future. He said his stock can last 10 days at the most and he needs to see a big jump

in business.

"I estimate in the next several months, I can sell half a cow every day," said Xiao, who declined to give his full name.

Much still hangs in the balance: Will his three partners rejoin the business? And with no other work skills, what will he do if sales don't pick up?

Along Yanzhi Road in Wuhan's Wuchang district, shops are doing a brisk business in staples such as meat and noodles, their loudspeakers blaring to attract customers.

Outside a food market, a long line formed of mostly elderly customers, all keeping their distance from each other and wearing the required masks, with some adding rubber gloves and hats.

The market operates from only 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and admits just 30 customers at a time, for a maximum of 20 minutes each. One of those in line, 70-year-old retired civil servant Xiao Yuxia, said she lives by herself and planned to eat fish for the first time in two months.

While many Chinese ordered what they needed using phone apps, 75-year-old retired worker Wang Haitao said he found that too confusing, and he and his wife are finding fewer choices on the list of options provided by community volunteers.

Along with meat, fresh vegetables appeared to be in good supply, though not with much variety. The food boxes delivered by volunteers to low-rise compounds typical of older neighborhoods such as Yanzhi Street were loaded mainly with carrots and cabbages.

The variety may be slightly better at the vegetable stalls set up around residential compounds, but social distancing is largely ignored at those: Customers and sellers gather in groups with little distance between them, bargaining and exchanging cash.

A delivery man who declined to give his name said he leaves all his packages at the fences set up to isolate residential compounds. After resuming his job two days earlier, he said he has his work cut out for him, with warehouses stuffed with packages that have been stuck there for months.

"We are still delivering the packages that people bought before the Lunar New Year," he said, referring to the end of January. "It's hard to tell which are daily necessities bought after the virus outbreak."

AP video journalist Olivia Zhang contributed to this story.

A guide to surviving financially as the bills come due

By SARAH SKIDMORE SELL AP Personal Finance Writer

The coronavirus has dealt a financial blow to millions of Americans and now April's bills are coming due.

The good news is there is help available. Reach out immediately to your mortgage lender, student loan servicer or utility provider to see what's available. Other assistance, such as stimulus checks or unemployment benefits, will take more time. The bottom line is that you need to take action to seek certain forms of relief.

Here is help navigating the biggest issues:

HOUSING

Numerous mortgage lenders have said they are willing to work with distressed borrowers, including potentially suspending or reducing payments. Contact them immediately to find out about your options.

If you hold a mortgage backed by Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac — about half of all mortgage holders do — there is help. The mortgage buyers have suspended all foreclosures and evictions for homes owned by their companies. They've also expanded their forbearance program, which could suspend payments for up to a year. Ask the company you make your payments to if you hold a Fannie or Freddie loan.

The federal government has also halted foreclosures and evictions for mortgages insured by the Federal Housing Administration.

Renters' fate depends on where they live and who they rent from. Reach out to your landlord or property management company to ask for leniency. Several cities, such as Seattle, San Francisco and Boston, have halted evictions due to the coronavirus.

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UTILITIES

Gas, electric, and other utility providers often have assistance programs for customers who cannot pay in full. There are also government and charitable programs to help low-income or struggling households. Ask the utility provider for referrals or call 2-1-1 for help finding local social service programs or charities. Several cities and regions have opted to halt utility shutoffs.

HEALTH INSURANCE

COBRA allows laid off workers at large employers to pay to continue their health insurance coverage, but it can be prohibitively expensive. Being laid off also qualifies as a life event for most insurers, which means someone could get on a partner's insurance outside of the normal open enrollment period.

Due to the coronavirus, a handful of states have reopened their individual insurance exchanges to people who didn't find coverage during the regular sign-up windows that started last fall. People who have lost coverage through their employer are allowed to shop on the exchanges outside the regular enrollment period.

Some households may qualify for their state's Medicaid program too.

DEBT

If you are struggling to pay your credit card, auto loan or other debt, reach out to your lender. They've been instructed by federal regulators to work with borrowers impacted by the virus. Banks have said they are willing to make a variety of arrangements such as waiving fees, temporarily lowering interest rates or making other payment arrangements.

STUDENT LOANS

Federal loan borrowers can now seek an emergency administrative forbearance, which would allow them to postpone payments for up to 60 days. Borrowers must contact a servicer to apply.

The federal government also lowered the interest rate on all federally held student loans to 0%. However, that will not lower the monthly payment; instead it will apply the payment entirely to the principle balance.

The government has also temporarily halted collections and wage garnishment for borrowers who've fallen behind on their federal student loans. It has instructed private collection agencies to follow suit.

If you have private student loans, contact your servicer for their repayment options.

BUDGET

It's time to cut any non—essential expenses,. That means ending your gym membership and trimming phone or internet plans. Daycare or monthly commuting passes might be paused or lowered during unemployment.

Consider extra work if you can to bring in income. If you still come up short, stay calm.

"Companies are rolling out programs to help with missed or late payments," said Kristin Pugh, a certified financial planner. "If you can't make a payment or can only make a partial payment you need to be proactive and reach out."

FPA is offering free financial guidance to Americans in need. A nonprofit credit counseling agency can also provide low cost help managing debt and creating a household budget.

If necessary, consider seeking aid for basic needs such as food and shelter. Or consider local food banks, which have more leniency in who they can help. United Way and 2-1-1 can also help you find social service support you may qualify for in your area.

GOVERNMENT HELP

Yes, the government is delivering one-time payments to adults but those are still weeks away.

Evelyn Zohlen, a certified financial planner and chair of the Financial Planning Association, urges people to use that money for needs not wants. If you are not in need, consider dropping that money into an emergency savings fund as anyone's economic picture can change quickly.

If you are laid off or your income has been reduced, apply for unemployment as soon as possible.

Congress is beefing up what states can offer — including allowing part-time, self-employed and gig economy workers who typically weren't covered to seek benefits. People who are quarantined, left work due to risk of exposure or to care for a family member can also apply.

Applications can typically take two to three weeks to process, though the surge in applications could

extend that time frame.

AP Business Reporter Tom Murphy contributed to this report from Indianapolis.

We want to hear how you've been financially impacted by the coronavirus. Email apmoney@ap.org to tell us more.

What you need to do to get your government stimulus check

By SARAH SKIDMORE SELL AP Personal Finance Writer

The IRS and the Treasury Department say Americans will start receiving their economic impact checks in the next three weeks.

The payments are part of the \$2.2 trillion rescue package signed into law last week by President Donald Trump aimed at combating the economic ravages of the coronavirus outbreak.

Most people don't need to do anything to get the money. But some — including senior citizens and low-income people who might not traditionally file tax returns — do need to take action. People behind on filing their taxes might also want to get caught up.

The IRS and Treasury have provided more details on how to ensure you get paid. Here are the basics:

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR THE PAYMENTS?

Anyone earning up to \$75,000 in adjusted gross income and who has a Social Security number will receive a \$1,200 payment. That means married couples filing joint returns will receive the full payment — \$2,400 — if their adjusted gross income, which what you report on your taxes, is under \$150,000.

The payment steadily declines for those who make more. Those earning more than \$99,000, or \$198,000 for joint filers, are not eligible. The thresholds are slightly different for those who file as a head of household.

Parents will also receive \$500 for each qualifying child.

WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO TO GET THE CHECK?

For most people, nothing.

The money will be directly deposited in your bank account if the government has that information from your tax return. If you haven't filed your 2019 taxes, the government will use information from your 2018 taxes to calculate your payment and determine where to send it. It can use your Social Security benefit statement as well.

I DON'T USUALLY HAVE TO FILE TAXES. DO I STILL GET A PAYMENT?

Yes. People who are not required to file a tax return — such as low-income tax payers, some senior citizens, Social Security recipients, some veterans and people with disabilities — will need to file a very simplified tax return to receive the economic impact payment. It provides the government basic details including a person's filing status, number of dependents and direct-deposit bank information.

I HAVEN'T FILED MY 2018 OR 2019 TAXES. WILL I STILL GET A PAYMENT?

Yes, but the IRS urges anyone required to file a tax return and has not yet done so for those years to file as soon as possible in order to receive an economic impact payment. Taxpayers should include their direct-deposit banking information on the return if they want it deposited in their account.

I DIDN'T USE DIRECT DEPOSIT ON MY TAXES, WHAT CAN I DO?

The government will default to sending you the check by mail if you did not use direct deposit.

However, IRS and Treasury say that they will develop an online portal in the coming weeks for individuals to provide their banking information so that they can receive the payments immediately instead of in the mail. It has not yet set a deadline for updating that information.

WHERE DO I DO THIS?

The IRS and Treasury say the website irs.gov/coronavirus will soon provide information about the check, including how people can file a simple 2019 tax return.

I NEED MORE TIME TO FILE MY TAX RETURNS. HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO GET THE PAYMENT?

The IRS says people concerned about visiting a tax professional or local community organization in person to get help with a tax return should not worry. The economic impact payments will be available throughout the rest of 2020.

Remote learning poses hurdles for students with disabilities

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

BOSTON (AP) — At school, Rose Hayes, 8, works with a team of teachers and therapists trained to help with her genetic condition. They set goals for her reading, give her physical therapy to improve her balance and make sure she stays on track. But for the last two weeks, her only connection to school has been through a computer screen.

Rose, home amid the coronavirus pandemic that has shuttered schools across the country, now watches lessons her teacher posts to YouTube. Her therapists check in via video chat. In between, she works through daily assignments.

Her parents say it's the best they can expect, but they still struggle. Rose has difficulty working on her own, so they need to stay nearby. And without the therapy equipment Rose uses at school, they have to improvise.

"We're trying to be teachers. We're trying to be therapists. We're a little bit of everything right now, and it's very stressful," said Rob Hayes, of Woonsocket, Rhode Island. He and his wife work for pharmaceutical companies and have continued working during the pandemic, trading turns staying home with Rose and their 2-year-old daughter.

Across the U.S., schools and families face new challenges in maintaining instruction for students with disabilities. Teachers are exploring new ways to deliver customized lessons from afar. And while parents of all children have taken on schooling duties, those whose children have disabilities are adding therapy, hands-on lessons and behavioral management to the list.

Last year, nearly 7 million U.S. students ages 3 to 18 received special education services, according to federal data. Schools are required to craft individual education plans for each one: For some, it's mostly a matter of providing extra time on assignments; others need an array of complex services, and some have lost access to expensive technology they use at school to help them communicate.

As they adapt to shutdowns, some schools are turning to video conferencing to provide lessons and therapy sessions, while others are bringing small groups of students back for services or training parents to help.

Some, though, have hesitated to move special education online. As virtual instruction began unrolling, the U.S. Education Department issued a reminder that students with disabilities must be granted the same opportunities as other students. It led some districts, including Philadelphia's public schools, to forgo online instruction entirely, citing concerns about their ability to serve all children.

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos blasted that approach, saying schools have a duty to serve their students. She urged schools to use online platforms or, if that isn't possible, low-tech alternatives like work packets or written assignments.

"It was extremely disappointing to hear that some school districts were using information from the Department of Education as an excuse not to educate kids," DeVos said in a March 23 statement. "This is a time for creativity and an opportunity to pursue as much flexibility as possible so that learning continues."

Many districts say it's inevitable that families would have to help. Some are asking parents to guide students through daily lessons or administer tests measuring their children's progress, a key component of special education laws.

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Officials in South Carolina's largest district said they know it's a tough ask, and they're asking families to set realistic expectations.

"We can't replicate the general education curriculum in the home, so we're not trying to replicate the special education program either," said Traci Hogan, Greenville's assistant superintendent for special education services. "It's not perfect on our end, and we don't expect it to be perfect on their end."

Advocates say it's crucial that students with disabilities continue to receive instruction during closures. Research has found that breaks in schooling — even for a day or two — can erode ground on skills students were starting to master. But keeping them engaged from afar will be a challenge, schools say, especially for those with severe disabilities.

A rescue package approved by Congress aims to help by providing \$13.5 billion that schools could use to buy computers and technology for students with disabilities. But it also asks DeVos to consider whether the government should temporarily waive requirements around the instruction of students with disabilities, a move disability advocates strongly oppose.

Amid rapid change, some parents say they already feel left out.

Darlene Gildersleeve, of Hopkinton, New Hampshire, has a 14-year-old daughter whose education plan includes counseling, occupational therapy, speech therapy and specialized instruction. Her school is offering to arrange some of that by phone and Google Classroom, but Gildersleeve hasn't heard anything about speech therapy or support for math, English and reading.

"I have no idea how to get on Google Classroom," Gildersleeve said. "That's a big concern of mine — will I be able to step in and help her?"

Some districts say it will be hard to avoid learning setbacks, especially in skills that are tougher to teach from afar. Honing social skills amid social distancing mandates, for example, has already proved challenging.

Rose Hayes' teacher tried to gather the class for a video conference, but some families didn't have the required technology, her father said. Elsewhere, teachers are using interactive video games to keep students connected, said Kelly Grillo, a special education coordinator for Cooperative School Services, an organization that works with nine school districts in Indiana.

But Grillo said some problems remain unsolved. She's currently grappling with how to help students who use costly Braille machines at school but don't have access to them at home.

"There are lots of barriers, but we can find lots of ways to work around them," said Grillo, of Lafayette, Indiana. "Our field has never felt the urgency that it feels right now."

Roslyn Holcomb, a social worker in Dunwoody, Georgia, worries that her son Kell, 8, isn't learning at the same pace he was in the classroom. His school posts daily video lessons, and his teacher calls every day to go over assignments he found difficult. But Kell, who has autism, ADHD and a language processing disorder, needs his mother's help to stay focused.

Holcomb shifted her schedule to work nights so she can spend her days helping him. She appreciates what the school has done, but wonders how much longer the arrangement can last.

"It's labor intensive. It really is," she said. "This is not something that we'll be able to do for months."

Associated Press writer Holly Ramer contributed to this story from Concord, New Hampshire.

Follow AP coverage of the virus outbreak at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>.

Feed the soul: In chaotic times, gardening becomes therapy

By JOHN RABY Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — Dig. Plant. Breathe.

As spring's arrival in the Northern Hemisphere coincides with government stay-at-home orders, the itch to get outside has turned backyard gardens into a getaway for the mind in chaotic times.

Gardeners who already know that working with soil is a way to connect with nature say it helps take

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away their worries, at least temporarily.

"I love to see things grow," Lindsay Waldrop said. "It's incredibly therapeutic."

Now more than ever.

Waldrop, a resident of Anaheim, California, has an anxiety disorder. Exercise is supposed to help, but her new job as a college biology professor had prevented her from getting into a routine.

Her grandfather, who introduced her to gardening by showing her how to plant seeds, died about a year ago.

Add the global coronavirus pandemic to all that, and it's easy to see where her focus is these days.

"Sometimes I just like to sit and dig holes in the quiet with my own thoughts," she said. "Outside, it takes my mind off. It gives something for my hands to do. It gives you a separate problem to think about than whatever else is going on. It gets you off of social media."

Waldrop and her husband moved last summer from New Mexico, where she didn't have much luck gardening in a scorching climate. At her new home, she got rid of the lawn, installed an irrigation system, and recently planted dozens of tomatoes, eggplant, peppers and other vegetables.

Over the years, Waldrop converted her skeptical husband, who initially wondered why digging in the dirt and moving things around was considered fun.

After tasting his first home-grown tomatoes, he was converted.

Families, too, are discovering that gardening gives cooped-up kids something to do, builds their self-esteem and brings variety to what has suddenly become a lot of time spent together.

In Miami, Annika Bolanos isn't a fan of the south Florida heat and mosquitoes. But going outdoors lately has been a lifeline.

Bolanos works at home making cakes and doing bookkeeping with her husband's golf cart business. Her three young children add an extra layer of busy, and together they've seeded a variety of vegetables and herbs.

"We have always loved the idea of growing our own food," Bolanos said. "It feels good to eat something that you grew yourself too. It also helps my kids eat more fruits and veggies since they find it cool to eat what they have grown."

Her children water the plants daily and concentrate on what's growing.

"You're feeling the sun and the breeze and don't have to worry about anything in the moment," Bolanos said.

In Britain and Germany, there's a premium on allotments — popular parcels of land rented for growing food crops.

"Those with a garden are the lucky ones," said Heidi Schaletzky, standing on the lawn beneath a cherry tree in the north of Berlin.

Schaletzky and her husband have been cultivating a plot in the "Free Country" community garden for the past eight years, growing strawberries, salad greens and kohlrabi. So far, access to garden plots remains exempt from restrictions intended to stop the spread of the virus in Germany.

"We'll be able to see other people, too," she said. "As long as they stay on their side of the fence."

As the weather warms, garden shops are bustling as other businesses shut during the outbreak.

At the Almaden Valley Nursery in San Jose, California, rose expert John Harp has seen a mix of new gardeners and regulars. Customers can't come into the shop, so their online orders are brought to their vehicles in the parking lot.

"Around town everyone is gardening right now," Harp said. "They're looking to be a little bit more self-sufficient."

This home-grown attitude goes back to World War II, when millions of people cultivated victory gardens to protect against potential food shortages while boosting patriotism and morale.

Hollie Niblett, who lives near Kansas City, Kansas, hopes the victory gardens come back. Niblett, who has a degree in horticultural therapy, tends to a kitchen garden near her backdoor, perennial flowers, flowering trees and shrubs, and upper and lower grassy yards connected by a path through an area left in its natural condition.

"There are so many things about it that feed my soul," she said. "Right now, more than anything, my garden gives me hope, gives me purpose and provides a sense of connection to something bigger than myself."

For beginners, wonderment awaits. Just south of Atlanta, 10-year-old Ezra Gandy's love for playing baseball has been paused. He and his grandmother, Melanie Nunnally, recently started an outdoor garden, planting strawberries, cabbage, broccoli, kale and asparagus.

"I like digging in the dirt because I like to see all the bugs and stuff that's in the ground," he said.

The nonprofit group KidsGardening.org suggests that children grow their own salads or do other activities.

The virus scare could even usher in a new crop of gardeners who start from seed rather than risk the crowds buying starter plants.

Kendra Schilling of Scott Depot, West Virginia, doesn't have space for a sprawling garden, so she's planting potatoes in a bucket and trying to figure out with her teenage daughter what to do with other vegetable seeds.

"I usually go buy the plants and stick them in the dirt. But this year we're going to try to do the seeds," she says. "Thank God for YouTube."

Associated Press writer Frank Jordans in Berlin contributed to this report.

Florida sheriff seeking tips in 'Tiger King' mystery

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — It might be the biggest diversion from the pandemic: binge-watching the luridly fascinating Netflix documentary "Tiger King: Murder, Mayhem and Madness."

Now a Florida sheriff is asking the public for tips regarding one of the lingering mysteries raised in the recently released show: What happened to Carole Baskin's husband?

For those who aren't up to speed, here's a primer: Carole Baskin is the owner of Big Cat Rescue in Tampa, Florida. Tiger King, the documentary, is about Joseph Maldonado-Passage, also known as "Joe Exotic," a former Oklahoma zookeeper who loves guns, younger men, and big cats.

Earlier this year, he was sentenced to 22 years in prison for his role in a murder-for-hire plot. He was convicted of trying to hire someone to kill Baskin, who had tried to shut him down, accusing the Oklahoma zoo of abusing animals and selling big cat cubs.

In retaliation, Maldonado-Passage raised questions about Baskin's former husband, Jack "Don" Lewis, who disappeared in 1997. His often violent and expletive-filled rants about Baskin were not only broadcast on his web TV show, but also in the documentary. Since the show was released, speculation about Baskin and Lewis has run rampant — and Hillsborough County Sheriff Chad Chronister wants to take advantage of all the attention.

"Everyone's home. They're watching Netflix and they're home," Chronister said in a news conference Tuesday, adding that Lewis' case remains open and that he's recently assigned a detective supervisor to handle new leads.

The documentary extensively covered Maldonado-Passage's repeated accusations that Baskin killed her husband and possibly fed him to her tigers. Baskin has never been charged with any crime and released a statement refuting the accusations made in the series.

"We hope the Sheriff's plea for leads will result in new information about what happened to Don Lewis," said Susan Bass, Big Cat Rescue's spokeswoman, in an email.

Chronister said at least six new leads a day about Lewis have come in over the past week.

"Nothing credible," he said. "Most tips are more theories."

The sheriff debunked a few allegations raised by Maldonado-Passage in the documentary, including that Lewis is buried under the Big Cat Rescue septic tank (that wasn't put in until years after Lewis' disappearance) and that Lewis' body was put through the meat grinders used to process food for the tigers (those were removed several weeks before his disappearance, Chronister said).

The documentary filmmakers "certainly spun it for entertainment purposes," Chronister said, adding that

he too binge-watched the series. "I think that's why all of us were so intrigued and engaged."

Maldonado-Passage isn't giving up, either: From behind bars, he filed a federal lawsuit seeking nearly \$94 million in damages, claiming among other things that he was convicted based on false and perjured testimony. He also says he was singled out for prosecution because he "is an openly gay male with the largest collection of generic tigers and cross breeds."

Almost half of U.S. foreign-born in past decade had college

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Almost half of the foreign-born who moved to the U.S. in the past decade were college-educated, a level of education greatly exceeding immigrants from previous decades, as the arrival of highly skilled workers supplanted workers in fields like construction that shrunk after the Great Recession.

New figures released this week by the U.S. Census Bureau show that 47% of the foreign-born population who arrived in the U.S. from 2010 to 2019 had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 36% of native-born Americans and 31% of the foreign-born population who entered the country in or before 2009.

A number of "push and pull" factors, some decades in the making, were responsible. What resulted were drops in immigration from Latin America and increases in Asian immigrants who tended to be better educated, experts said.

The changes in immigration had nothing to do with policies from the administration of President Donald Trump, which has attempted to discourage migration across the southern border and often portrayed immigrants as burdens on the U.S. health, safety and welfare systems, demographers said.

"These data do not comport with statements by the Trump administration, which have never been based on facts, but on an apparent desire to scapegoat immigrants as the cause of America's woes," said Cynthia Feliciano, a sociology professor at Washington University in St. Louis. "Even if we were considering the period prior to 2009, when the educational profile of immigrants was not skewed so highly, the notion that immigrants are a drain on the U.S. economy is just not supported by the evidence."

Immigration from Latin American has been declining for more than a decade, and in the past several years it has even reversed itself with regard to Mexicans, who up until a dozen years ago were the greatest source of new immigrants in the U.S. In the past several years, more Mexicans living in the U.S. went back than came north across the border. Plummeting fertility rates in Mexico starting two decades ago shrunk the number of young job-seekers who would have headed north to the U.S., and the Great Recession a dozen years ago and its aftermath caused the disappearance of jobs in some industries like construction that were attractive to workers with little formal education, said Karthick Ramakrishnan, a political science professor at the University of California, Riverside.

"The big thing you see, up through 2008, Mexico was the largest-sending country to the U.S., followed by China and India," Ramakrishnan said. "What you see is a crossover around 2007 to 2009. You see this crossover, where you have China and India as the largest source countries."

He added, "It's as much a story about the massive decline in migration from Mexico and central America, as it is a story about increased Asian migration."

Drawing the Asian workers to the U.S. was a demand for highly-educated employees in tech fields that could not be filled with U.S. workers since there was a shortage of U.S. workers with those skills. At the same time in the past decade, many highly-educated workers from Asia who had been in the U.S. for some time were bringing over family members, who also tended to be highly-educated, said Manuel Pastor, director of the Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration at the University of Southern California.

Trump has long criticized "chain migration," a pejorative term used by anti-immigrant activists to describe a policy that allows legal U.S. residents to sponsor family members to immigrate to the U.S. It's the most common form of legal immigration.

"The administration's push was, 'We need to favor skilled immigrants,'" Pastor said. "We are getting skilled immigrants if we stick to family policy. We have highly educated folks from family policy."

It's a "snowball effect," said Richard Wright, a professor in the Department of Geography at Dartmouth.

"We have 50-plus years of arrivals from Asia," Wright said. "A lot of them are arriving with formal skills and they are able to sponsor family members who are also educated."

Follow Mike Schneider on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/MikeSchneiderAP>.

'It is brutal': Hollywood's rank-and-file on the pandemic

By MIKE CIDONI LENNOX Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The red carpets are rolled up in storage, the A-listers holed up in mansions, multiplex doors are closed. For now, at least, the coronavirus has shut down much of Hollywood. And for the entertainment industry's many one-gig-at-a-time staff and freelance workers — a quarter-million people in Los Angeles County alone — it's an economic disaster.

There's the hair stylist who can't do his job due to social distancing, the TV producer whose feature film premiere drew only a few dozen audience members days before theaters closed, and the event producer who fears losing her family home. Six men and women in the entertainment industry explain below how their lives have been upended by the coronavirus.

"IT TAKES YOUR BREATH AWAY"

A year ago, Los Angeles-based film and entertainment publicist Annie Jeeves says she would have been "bouncing from plane to plane, city to city, with film festivals, launching different films and preparing for the Cannes Film Festival."

Not this year.

"Corona(virus) derailed me," Jeeves said. "Literally the day that South by Southwest (festival) was no more, it was a snowball effect, and I was on the phone with current clients and clients who aren't even on and advising on strategy and pivoting. And it's been pivot, and really what ends up being crisis management since."

The uncertainty is devastating for independent contractors and freelancers who depend on steady income to survive.

"I mean, independents lose houses. They lose everything. They go through savings that, you know, they have a little bit of, but not a lot," Jeeves said. "I think people think of Hollywood and they think of A-list stars on red carpets. I think of Hollywood and I think of all my friends who are independents, all of them who do costume, do hair, do makeup, produce show runners, editors, composers — like that's Hollywood to me. ... And when things like this happen or like the writers' strike happened, it is brutal and it takes your breath away."

But it has not dealt Jeeves a knockout punch. She says she's got a nest egg. And because it's a job for Jeeves to help clients "pivot" out of problems, she's got a lot of ideas to do some pivoting herself. She's taking advantage of the unexpected spare time, taking her photography hobby more seriously.

"It's definitely a creative passion that I think feeds me, especially when, you know, things might be kind of tenuous."

"WE'RE GOING TO ALL NEED A BIG GLOBAL EXHALE"

The first week of March, event producer Heather Hope-Allison and her husband, Steve were putting together the schedule for the ninth season of Street Food Cinema, a six-month series of events in the Los Angeles area featuring film indoor and outdoor screenings, food trucks and musical acts.

Hope-Allison, a 48-year-old mother of two, said recent Street Food Cinema seasons have attracted approximately 100,000 attendees.

But when Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti announced a citywide "Safer At Home" order, shutting down all nonessential businesses due to the coronavirus, it became unclear whether Hope-Allison would be hosting any kind of season at all — with a worst-case scenario being losing the family house and selling what remains of her company.

"We're a family owned business," she explained. "You know, we're not a big corporation. We regularly deal with the studios. Our sponsors are Southwest (Airlines) — hugely impacted industry; Live Nation, hugely

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impacted industry —and many different brands throughout the season. Although we work on a very large scale and we work with very large companies, at the end of the day, our business supports our family”

Hope-Allison couldn't continue speaking. She began to cry. But after pulling herself together, she ended up on the bright side.

“I keep telling myself that when the community is ready to get back together again, we're going to need these events. We're going to need the community to be able to come together comfortably and to exhale. We're going to all need a big global exhale and celebration that it's over.”

“I'M WATCHING MY FRIENDS PANIC”

On March 14, TV producer and film director Leslie Thomas was one step closer to the Hollywood dream. That night, her feature-film directorial debut was set to premiere at the Pasadena Film Festival. Tickets were sold out for the 250-seat theater set to screen her indie comedy “Honesty Weekend.”

“And 30 to 35 people showed up,” Thomas said, “because they were terrified of the coronavirus.”

A day later, the Los Angeles mayor ordered cinemas closed in response to the coronavirus outbreak.

The following Monday, more bad news came: “I got the news that I am ‘on hiatus’ for two weeks for my day job, which is I produce several series for a very popular network that's based on food. And I've produced these series for several years and we are struggling. We don't know where to shoot. We don't know when it's safe to shoot. We don't know how this is going to resolve itself.”

She knows that her situation isn't exclusive to the world of entertainment. But entertainment is the professional world of herself and her wife, a TV show runner/documentary filmmaker.

“I feel like there is such a great loss of momentum,” Thomas said. “Just everything coming to a screeching halt and affecting everyone who works in this industry — you know, from the people who would build the sets on the stages to the people who do makeup to the people who cater to the actors and just to everyone. It's just a screeching halt to an entire industry.”

“HOW LONG IS THIS GOING TO LAST?”

TV and film music composer Matt Hutchinson says he's watched production “grinding to a halt” across Hollywood. But, for now, he's still on the job —working remotely with the help of video conference calls with filmmakers and musicians.

“We're able to still do some of the work that we would normally do: spotting sessions, which are when I review a television episode, for example, with the producers and we go through and decide what we're going to be scoring and how to score it,” he said. “I'm just very, very fortunate to not be in a paycheck-to-paycheck situation.”

Hutchinson, 41, has more than 100 total sound/additional music/music score credits, with projects including last year's Octavia Spencer horror film “Ma.”

Hutchinson says he's not sure what will happen in the period between when his current gig ends and TV and film production resumes.

“I think the big question is, ‘How long is this going to last? And what's going to happen with things like pilot productions?’ Obviously, the fall TV schedule typically shows come out in the fall. Is that still going to happen?” he said. “And I just have to wait and see with everyone else. And we're all on the same boat.”

“IT'S A GIANT SCRAMBLE”

Unlike many of his colleagues, TV editor and filmmaker Pi Ware is still working.

Keeping specifics close to the vest, Ware said he continues to do editing for a “big show for a big network” — only now working from his home instead of a studio, which took some doing.

“There's a lot of technological and security issues to deal with when you're taking a huge edit facility and then suddenly splitting it into 45 different units to work from home,” he explained.

Ware, 48, was just coming off stress of the cancellation of the Cleveland Film Festival, which was to premiere his big-screen documentary feature, “Skin Deep: The Battle Over Morgellons.”

“The silver lining here is that, in my case, because I'll be going digital and because folks are home because of coronavirus, there will be an opportunity for folks to see the film,” he said.

Ware's editing job will provide a steady paycheck through the end of spring. But many of his friends

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aren't so lucky.

"Most of the people I know who are editors, they'll continue to work for a few more weeks. But most of the people I know who are producers, their shows are shut down completely. They're out of work. They don't have income. That's that."

And once Ware's current gig ends later this spring, Ware doesn't know where to start looking.

"Other network shows that I could possibly edit, they're on hiatus until who knows when," he said.

"ALL OF MY JOBS ENDED"

With awards season and a flurry of other major start-of-year events done, celebrity hairstylist Steven Mason anticipated this to be a slow period.

But his bookings came to a total stop when public health officials began to call for more extreme "social distancing."

"Considering that I'm literally touching the person," Mason said, "when social distancing started a week or two ago, basically all of my jobs ended."

But at least one of his celebrity friendships continued. Mason, 40, said he became close with actress Alison Pill, working together frequently as she was doing press for both "Picard," which he worked on, and the new techno-thriller "Devs."

"We had a lot of events going on: photo shoots, press tours," said Mason, who lives in Arcadia, California. "So, she's checked in to see how I'm doing."

Mason, a contract worker who is not a union member, said he has a nest egg to get him through "a couple of weeks" without work. "Until then," he said, "(I'll) take it easy and get things done that have been waiting a long time."

Follow Mike Cidoni Lennox on Twitter: www.twitter.com/cidonilennox

VIRUS DIARY: The world seemed small and accessible. No more.

By JULIE PACE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For the first time in years, we've put our suitcases away. Flights have been canceled. The shared Google calendar where we tracked each other's travel schedules is empty for the foreseeable future.

For my husband and me, travel has been a constant of our more than decade together. Long multi-country trips with American presidents on Air Force One and weeks spent in political battleground states for me; Monday through Thursday consultant travel and, more recently, quick trips to a new employer's London headquarters for him.

It's often stressful, just as often exhilarating. The suitcases on the bedroom floor in a half-unpacked, half-packed state meant the prospect of discovering a new destination or returning to a familiar locale. Business trips offered the chance to find a place worth returning to someday just for fun.

The world seemed small, accessible. And I know how lucky we were to feel like it was.

Now, those same places seem so distant, so out of reach. And they quite literally are, with stay-at-home orders spreading and travel restricted to all but the essentials as the world strains to control the spread of the fast-moving coronavirus.

For us, the changes came slowly at first. My husband's trip to San Francisco was scrapped as northern California grappled with an outbreak. Then the SXSW conference in Austin, Texas, which draws hundreds of thousands of people each year, canceled.

I was still studying the Democratic presidential primary calendar, looking for an upcoming state to travel to for a story. But those states kept pushing their contests further back, until there was nothing left on the horizon.

My last hope was a one-night trip to New York for a business dinner. I could wipe down the Amtrak seat with a disinfectant wipe, I figured. A colleague who had made the same trip offered a DIY tip: laying a dish towel over the tray table, then carefully depositing it in a Ziploc bag. Besides, how much grimmer

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would Penn Station be in the middle of a pandemic than it is any other time?

Then my company restricted nonessential travel, and my business dinner didn't make the cut. The next day, we all began to work from home.

Now our world actually is small, centered around our compact city house with its postage-stamp sized backyard. Forget planes and trains; we've driven our car once in nearly three weeks.

Ours is hardly a hardship tale, particularly at a time when so many people around the world are ill and so many others are facing financial hardship. We both have our jobs, and our freezer and pantry are well-stocked. Working from home has given us more time to spend with our 2-year-old son and our attention-hungry dog. We recognize how fortunate we are.

Still, just a few weeks into this new reality, I find myself longing for the world. Not any place in particular. Simply the ability to be out in it.

When I make my midday escape for a walk around our neighborhood, I keep looking to the sky to see how many planes I can spot flying overhead. We're just a few miles away from Reagan National Airport. But on most days, I'm lucky if I spot one.

At night, I scan the news and find myself pausing to scroll through photo galleries of iconic locations around the world, many of them places I've visited. At first, there's something eerily beautiful about the empty scenes at the Eiffel Tower or St. Peter's Square, the desolate streets of New York and San Francisco. Then it's simply sad.

And I think to myself: Someday we'll go back.

Julie Pace is The Associated Press' Washington bureau chief. Follow her on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/JPaceDC>

Urgent question from small businesses: When will aid arrive?

By **JOYCE M. ROSENBERG AP Business Writer**

NEW YORK (AP) — When will the money arrive?

That's the urgent question for small business owners who have been devastated by the coronavirus outbreak. They're awaiting help from the \$2 trillion rescue package signed into law Friday. But with bills fast coming due, no end to business closings and an economy that's all but shut down, owners are worried about survival.

Millions of owners face April 1 due dates for rent, mortgage, credit card and other payments. Some have been granted leniency from landlords and lenders. But even then, there are other business and personal bills that are owed. And employees — at least those who haven't been laid off — must be paid.

"How quick can we get these funds?" says Adam Rammel, co-owner of Brewfontaine, a bar and restaurant in Bellefontaine, Ohio, that's now limited to takeout and delivery service. His revenue is down 60%. Yet he has eight staffers, down from his usual 25, whom he must pay.

"Relief can't come soon enough — we're a cash business with small margins," says Rammel, who is looking to Small Business Administration loans. He needs the money despite receiving some concessions from his banker.

Freelancers and people whose gig work has vanished are also anxious about having to wait.

"I need to pay my electric bill and the mortgage," says Krista Kowalczyk, whose Southwest Florida photography business has come to a halt as weddings have been canceled and customers have decided against having portraits shot.

She feels somewhat reassured that she can receive unemployment benefits. But while she waits, "I am terrified that not only do I have no revenue coming in, I have also been asked for thousands of dollars in refunds."

At companies small and large, from restaurants and retailers to sports and entertainment venues, revenue has essentially dried up. The same for the businesses that support those companies. Even employers that are still operating have lost business as their customers have become too cautious to continue doing

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business.

The rescue package signed into law Friday provides for Small Business Administration loans to companies as well as to sole proprietors and freelancers. The loans can be used for payroll, mortgages, rent and utilities, with those amounts forgiven and payments deferred. It will also supply small loans that can, depending on an owner's credit score, be approved quickly. Employers can receive tax credits for retaining workers, though not if they have obtained one of the SBA loans.

Many owners are also seeking separate SBA economic injury disaster loans. And the Federal Reserve plans to set up a program to lend directly to small business owners.

In addition, freelancers are now eligible for unemployment benefits. And owners can be eligible for the \$1,200 per person payment that's available to many Americans depending on their income.

Whatever the source of funding, how fast it arrives at businesses across the country is sure to have a significant impact on the economy. Slightly more than half of American workers are employed at businesses with 500 or fewer employees. Every lost job means another person will struggle to pay rent or other bills. Unpaid bills, in turn, cut revenue for other businesses.

Layoffs are mounting, and most analysts forecast that the economy will shrink significantly in the April-June quarter, with some estimating a 30% annual plunge for the quarter. That would be deepest economic contraction for any quarter in records dating to World War II. In the week that ended March 21, roughly 3.3 million people applied for unemployment benefits — more than 10 times the number for the previous week and nearly five times the prior record high.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has said the small loans would be available starting Friday, and in an interview with the Fox Business Network, Mnuchin said he hoped to release loan forms later Monday.

Katie Vlietstra, an executive at the National Association for the Self-Employed, an advocacy group, says she's concerned about the lag time between application and approval for even the small loans that are intended to have the fastest turnaround. Most small companies have only 15 to 30 days of cash on hand, she said.

There are also worries about potential logjams at the SBA. The agency's inspector general's office found that the SBA failed to quickly turn around thousands of loans after Hurricane Harvey devastated the Houston area in 2017. (The SBA didn't immediately respond to a request for information about handling an influx of applications.)

John Arensmeyer, CEO of the advocacy group Small Business Majority, says he's concerned that the loans will be processed through the SBA's traditional business loan program, which relies on banks to handle the initial applications.

"Banks have to retool their technology to do this," Arensmeyer says. "It's going to be months before this money gets out there. How many people are going to be able to maintain payroll, hoping to get this money?"

On its face, the rescue aid appears to address some of the most vital needs of small businesses, notably their ability to maintain or hire back furloughed workers eventually. The issue is whether it will come quickly enough.

"The challenge is cash flow," says Jason Duff, owner of Six Hundred Downtown, a restaurant in Bellefontaine, Ohio. He has a staff of eight, down from 27, handling deliveries and pickups.

Duff has less than a week of working capital funds available. He is seeking loans from family and friends as well as some patience from vendors while he awaits federal help.

Don Allison has bills coming due this week for his business, a publisher of books about the Civil War and northwest Ohio history. He and his wife are looking forward to a combined \$2,400. But the royalty checks he must send out require a bigger cash infusion. And he's concerned about being in a long line of owners hoping to receive SBA loans.

"They're going to be slammed," Allison says of the SBA. "How big a delay is there going to be?"

AP Economics Writer Christopher Rugaber in Washington contributed to this report.

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Follow Joyce Rosenberg at www.twitter.com/JoyceMRosenberg. Her work can be found here: <https://apnews.com>

In a story March 30, about small businesses awaiting financial help from the government, The Associated Press misspelled the name of Katie Vlietstra, an executive with the National Association for the self-employed.

Un-baaaaa-lievable: Goats invade locked-down Welsh town

LONDON (AP) — Un-baaaaa-lievable: This wild bunch is completely ignoring rules on social distancing. With humans sheltering indoors to escape the new coronavirus, mountain goats are taking advantage of the peace and space to roam in frisky clumps through the streets of Llandudno, a town in North Wales.

Andrew Stuart, a video producer for the Manchester Evening News, has been posting videos of the furry adventurers on his Twitter feed and they are racking up hundreds of thousands of views.

He said the goats normally keep largely to themselves, in a country park that butts up against Llandudno. But now emboldened by the lack of people and cars, the long-horned animals are venturing deeper into the seaside town. The U.K. has been in lockdown for the past week to combat the spread of the coronavirus.

"There's no one around at the moment, because of the lockdown, so they take their chances and go as far as they can. And they are going further and further into the town," Stuart told The Associated Press in an interview Tuesday from his parents' pub in Llandudno, where he is waiting out the pandemic.

His videos show the goats munching on people's neatly trimmed hedges and trees in front yards and loitering casually on empty streets as if they own the place.

"One of the videos on my Twitter shows that they were on a narrow side street and I was on the other side and they were scared of me. They were edging away from me. So they are still scared of people," Stuart said. "But when there's hardly anyone around on the big streets, they are taking their chances, they are absolutely going for it. And I think because it's so quiet, and there's hardly anyone around to scare them or anything, that they just don't really care and are eating whatever they can."

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, and death.

US consumer confidence sinks as virus begins having impact

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. consumer confidence tumbled this month to its lowest level in nearly three years as the impact of the coronavirus on the economy began to be felt.

The Conference Board reported Tuesday that its confidence index dropped to a reading of 120 in March from February's 132.6. It was the lowest reading since the index was at 117.3 in June 2017.

The steep decline in March reflected rising worries about the coronavirus during the survey period of March 1-18. Economists say confidence is sure to fall further as the virus' impact takes a bigger toll on the economy.

Analysts said the sharp drop in the confidence index reflects rising concerns about the damage the virus will cause and about the sharp declines in stock markets.

"The intensification of Covid-19 and extreme volatility in the financial markets have increased uncertainty about the outlook for the economy and jobs," said Lynn Franco, senior director of economist indicators at the Conference Board.

"March's decline in confidence is more in line with a severe contraction — rather than a temporary shock — and further declines are sure to follow," Franco said.

Both a sub-index the covers consumers' view of current business and job market conditions and another

sub-index that covers expectations of future conditions fell in March.

In shadow of COVID-19, Army Field Band plays on for America

By ALLEN G. BREED AP National Writer

For members of the U.S. Army Field Band, it has never been merely about the music. Yes, they wanted to please the ear, but they played for the Army. For America.

So earlier this month, when concert dates evaporated with the spread of COVID-19 and the band was ordered back to Fort George G. Meade in Maryland, there was never any question: The band would not stand down. The music would not stop.

With an already faithful following on Facebook and YouTube, they quickly set up a studio space from which to live stream.

The result: a daily "We Stand Ready" virtual concert series that has attracted more than 4.3 million viewers in just 10 days, said Master Sgt. Brian T. Sacawa, a Concert Band saxophonist for 17 years.

Music "has the power to make incredibly deep and meaningful connections," said Sacawa, a native of Schenectady, New York. "It inspires people. It heals people. It unites people. And what better time than now to send that message to the American people?"

The unit includes the concert band, a chorus, jazz band and other smaller ensembles. It broadcasts from the concert band rehearsal hall, which now looks more like a television studio.

Like other Americans, band members have been ordered to socially distance -- something that poses unique challenges for musicians.

Singing lead with the unit's barbershop quartet, Sgt. Maj. Rob McIver is used to standing cheek-to-jowl with his comrades.

"It is a little strange to sing barbershop quartets and sing them at a distance of 6 feet or greater from your colleagues," said McIver, an Owensboro, Kentucky, native. "It makes it a little more difficult to, you know, kind of like physically play off with each other if there's, like, a gag bit or something that's supposed to be sort of funny."

Normally, the unit's 150 musicians and support personnel spend about 100 days a year crisscrossing the country and globe, performing in concert halls, veterans' homes, school gymnasiums and, sometimes, the theater of war.

There are benefits to staying at home. Sgt. Maj. Erica Russo, an alto in the Soldiers' Chorus who was recently named the unit's director of operations, can view the concerts with her 7-year-old son, Thomas.

She has been with the band for 19 years; the rehearsal for her boot camp ceremony was held on Sept. 11, 2001. This, she says, is another moment when the band's music can help give Americans strength and reassurance.

Sitting on the couch with Thomas, watching on a laptop as Sgt. 1st Class Randy Wight belted out "America the Beautiful" in a soulful baritone, Russo found herself with tears streaming down her face.

"Mom!" her son exclaimed. "You have been singing the song for a million years."

And she had -- hundreds of times, stoically and professionally. But it was as if she were hearing that old song with new ears.

"For just that beautiful little moment," she said, "this microcosm of emotion just made me really understand what it is we do."

While nonstop global news about the effects of the coronavirus have become commonplace, so, too, are the stories about the kindness of strangers and individuals who have sacrificed for others. "One Good Thing" is an AP continuing series reflecting these acts of kindness.

Today in History
By The Associated Press undefined

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Today in History

Today is Wednesday, April 1, the 92nd day of 2020. There are 274 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 1, 1976, Apple Computer was founded by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak and Ronald Wayne.

On this date:

In 1789, the U.S. House of Representatives held its first full meeting in New York; Frederick Muhlenberg of Pennsylvania was elected the first House speaker.

In 1891, the Wrigley Co. was founded in Chicago by William Wrigley, Jr.

In 1917, Scott Joplin, "The King of Ragtime Writers," died at a New York City hospital; he was believed to have been 49 years old.

In 1945, American forces launched the amphibious invasion of Okinawa during World War II. (U.S. forces succeeded in capturing the Japanese island on June 22.)

In 1954, the United States Air Force Academy was established by President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

In 1963, New York City's daily newspapers resumed publishing after settlement was reached in a 114-day strike. The daytime drama "General Hospital" premiered on ABC-TV.

In 1970, President Richard M. Nixon signed a measure banning cigarette advertising on radio and television, to take effect after Jan. 1, 1971.

In 1972, the first Major League Baseball players' strike began; it lasted 12 days.

In 1984, Marvin Gaye was shot to death by his father, Marvin Gay (correct), Sr. in Los Angeles, the day before the recording star's 45th birthday. (The elder Gay pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter and received probation.)

In 1987, in his first speech on the AIDS epidemic, President Ronald Reagan told doctors in Philadelphia, "We've declared AIDS public health enemy no. 1."

In 1992, the National Hockey League Players' Association went on its first-ever strike, which lasted 10 days.

In 2003, American troops entered a hospital in Nasiriyah (nah-sih-REE'-uh), Iraq, and rescued Army Pfc. Jessica Lynch, who had been held prisoner since her unit was ambushed on March 23.

Ten years ago: Roman Catholic cardinals across Europe used their Holy Thursday sermons to defend Pope Benedict XVI from accusations he'd played a role in covering up sex abuse scandals. Dayton denied the previous year's national champs another title as the Flyers beat North Carolina 79-68 to win the NIT. Actor John Forsythe, 92, died in Santa Ynez, California.

Five years ago: Sen. Bob Menendez, D-N.J., was charged with accepting nearly \$1 million worth of gifts and travel from a longtime friend in exchange for a stream of political favors on the donor's behalf; a defendant Menendez, maintaining his innocence, declared he was "not going anywhere." (The Justice Department dropped charges after a trial ended in a hung jury.) Eleven former Atlanta public school educators were convicted of racketeering for their role in a cheating scheme to inflate students' scores on standardized exams. California Gov. Jerry Brown ordered officials to impose statewide mandatory water restrictions for the first time in history. Cynthia Lennon, the first wife of John Lennon, died at her home in Spain; she was 75.

One year ago: Britain's parliament rejected four alternatives to the government's European Union divorce deal, options that would have softened or even halted the departure; the votes left the U.K. with 12 days to come up with a new plan or crash out of the bloc in chaos. A second woman said former Vice President Joe Biden had acted inappropriately, touching her face with both hands and rubbing noses with her in 2009. Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika (ahb-DUL'-ah-ZEEZ' boot-uh-FLEE'-kuh) agreed to step down before the end of his fourth term in April, yielding to growing calls for his resignation after two decades in power.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Jane Powell is 91. Actor Don Hastings is 86. Baseball Hall of Famer Phil Niekro is 81. Actress Ali MacGraw is 81. Rhythm-and-blues singer Rudolph Isley is 81. Reggae singer Jimmy Cliff is 72. Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito is 70. Rock musician Billy Currie (Ultravox) is 70. Actress Annette O'Toole is 68. Movie director Barry Sonnenfeld is 67. Singer Susan Boyle is 59. Actor Jose Zuniga is 58. Country singer Woody Lee is 52. Actress Jessica Collins is 49. Rapper-actor Method Man is 49. Movie directors Albert and Allen Hughes are 48. Political commentator Rachel Maddow is 47. Former tennis player

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Magdalena Maleeva is 45. Actor David Oyelowo (oh-YEHLOH'-oh) is 44. Actor JJ Field is 42. Singer Bijou Phillips is 40. Actor Sam Huntington is 38. Comedian-actor Taran Killam is 38. Actor Matt Lanter is 37. Actor Josh Zuckerman is 35. Country singer Hillary Scott (Lady Antebellum) is 34. Rock drummer Arejay Hale (Halestorm) is 33. Actor Asa Butterfield is 23. Actor Tyler Wladis is 10.

Thought for Today: "Our wisdom comes from our experience, and our experience comes from our foolishness." — Sacha Guitry, Russian-born French actor-writer-director (1885-1957).