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Cheer someone up!
Send a balloon!
These are \$6
(includes delivery in Groton & Tax)
Groton Daily Independent
21 N Main
605-397-NEWS (6397)



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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COMMUNITY UPDATE - APRIL 9, 2020

JOE SCHWAN

THURSDAY, APRIL 09, 2020

Dear Families of Groton Area School Students,

As announced by Governor Noem earlier this week, South Dakota schools – including Groton Area – will remain closed for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. We will continue to promote educational growth and opportunity through implementation of the flexible learning plan. More than ever, we're counting on the cooperation of parents and students in actively participating in this learning by completing assignments and participating in class activities. While nothing can replace the time we're losing in school, we all share a responsibility to grow as much as possible during this time.

For the week of April 13 through April 17, there will be a couple of changes to what has become our new "normal" routine. First, the delivery of academic materials will take place on Tuesday, April 14th in the typical manner at the MS/HS and elementary buildings according to the schedule below for in-town students and by using our bus routes for out-of-town students. School lunches will be handed out in a drive-thru manner from the elementary location only – MS/HS students receiving lunches should pick up their school work then drive through the elementary parking lot to pick up their lunches. If your family is not currently receiving lunches but would like to begin, please contact Mr. Clocksene at Brandon.Clocksene@k12.sd.us. The second date for meal delivery next week will be Thursday, April 16 by delivery and at the elementary.

During this process, we want to ensure that we can be mindful of the recommendations of health officials concerning the size of group gatherings, personal hygiene for clean hands, and social distancing. Only one representative from each family will be permitted to pick up materials and will be asked to take materials for all family members. Nobody that feels ill or is otherwise under advisement for quarantine should be sent to gather materials. We must also request for questions and discussions with staff members be limited during the in-person exchanges and invite those questions via phone call or email. It is possible that not all students will have materials to pick up if all of their content is being provided online. We are encouraging people to wear bandanas or facemasks when they pick materials up. School staff have been asked to wear masks as an additional level of protection for those we encounter, so don't be alarmed by this when you arrive.

The following schedule of material pick-up has been established for in-town residents. If possible, we ask that you make every effort to follow the timelines provided. If families are unable to make the established times work, they will not be turned away, but access may be managed if certain times become too busy. Each building will be open for pick-up from 8:00 AM to 10:00 AM. Pick-up from the elementary will be held in the Elementary Commons. Pick-up from the MS/HS will be held in the GHS Gymnasium.

Time	Grade Level
8:00 AM	PreK/JK Grade 6
8:15 AM	K and Grade 7
8:30 AM	Grade 1 and Grade 8
8:45 AM	Grade 2 and Grade 9
9:00 AM	Grade 3 and Grade 10
9:15 AM	Grade 4 and Grade 11
9:30 AM	Grade 5 and Grade 12
9:45 AM	Buses will be loaded with materials for our out-of-town students.

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Beginning at 9:45, we will be loading the school buses with materials for every student on a regular bus route whose materials haven't been picked up. The buses will run their normal routes, stopping to drop off all of the materials for the week. We ask that families please respect the 6 foot personal boundaries for our delivery staff by not coming on to the school bus to try and retrieve materials. If you have muddy driveways or driveways that can't otherwise be used by a bus, we are asking that you place a box or plastic tote at the end of your driveway for us to leave your materials in.

School Meals – Updated for Week of April 13 - April 17

Lunch Distribution will take place at the following times and places:

Tuesday, April 14, 2020: In-town students at Groton Area Elementary from 8:00 AM to 10:00 AM. Out-of-town students via bus routes.

Thursday, April 16, 2020: In-town students at Groton Area Elementary from 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM. Out-of-town students via bus routes.

We encourage all families to take advantage of this service during this time. All children in our district aged 18 and under are eligible for participation at no cost. Even if your participation is simply a matter of personal convenience, we'd like to help. If you haven't yet signed up for these meals and would like to begin participating, please contact us.

Sincerely,

Joe Schwan Superintendent

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GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

School Board Meeting

April 14, 2020 – 7:00 PM – Electronic Meeting

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of March 9, 2020 school board meeting and April 2, 2020 special school board meeting as drafted.
2. Approval of March District bills for payment

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Approval of March 2020 Financial Report, Agency Accounts, and Investments.
3. Approval of March 2020 Transportation Report.
4. Approval of March 2020 School Lunch Report.
5. Continued discussion and necessary action on District response to COVID-19 closure.
6. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager's Report

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Discussion/Action on Summer 2020 Driver's Education.
2. Review District health insurance plan options with motion to adopt plan offerings for 2020-2021.
3. Adopt renewal motion for Associated School Boards Protective Trust (Health Plan).
4. Review and approve proposals for property/liability insurance and worker's compensation insurance.
5. Approve resolution authorizing membership in the SDHSAA for the 2020-2021 school year.
6. Approve resignation of Whitney Berner at the end of the 2019-2020 school year.
7. Approve resignation of Cody Swanson at the end of the 2019-2020 school year.
8. Discussion/Action on posting music teacher vacancy.
9. Approve lane change for Julie Erdmann from MS+30 to MS+45.
10. Executive session pursuant SDCL 1-25-2(1) for personnel and SDCL 1-25-2(4) for negotiations.
11. Approve open enrollment #20-13 due to special circumstances.
12. Approve hiring Greg Kjellsen as High School Math Teacher with salary to be published in July.
13. Issue 2020-2021 teacher contracts with a return date of Friday, April 24, 2020 with final terms to be negotiated at a later date.
14. Issue 2020-2021 off-staff coaching agreements with a return date of Friday, April 24, 2020 with final terms to be negotiated at a later date.

ADJOURN

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/807981652?pwd=RXB4Vyt6SzhMTWd0c0hONXpLNitwQT09>

Meeting ID: 807 981 652; Password: 7TF4jV

Dial by your location: +1 346 248 7799 US (Houston); +1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose); +1 253 215 8782 US; +1 301 715 8592 US; +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago); +1 646 558 8656 US (New York);

Meeting ID: 807 981 652; Password: 910523

Find your local number: <https://zoom.us/u/abqLs4QvJ>

Nutrition Program Assistance Available During COVID-19 Pandemic

PIERRE, S.D. –The South Dakota Department of Human Services (DHS) would like to remind the state's elderly population that assistance is available through the department's nutrition program.

The program provides access to healthy meals, which are an important part of maintaining overall health. Education and counseling about food safety and healthy eating is a part of the service provided.

DHS Secretary Shawnie Rechtenbaugh said, "DHS, in partnership with our nutrition program providers, are committed to helping older adults maintain their nutritional health during this public health emergency."

The nutrition program is targeted at adults age 60 and older who are in the greatest social and economic need. The Adult Nutrition program is authorized under Title III-C of the Older Americans Act, and there are no income guidelines for this program.

All meals are provided on a voluntary donation basis. Individuals may sign up for meals directly with a nutrition provider in your area.

For a complete list of nutrition providers and locations, please visit <http://sdnutrition.net/> or call Dakota at Home at 1-833-663-9673 if you are experiencing difficulty in finding a nutrition site in your area.

Additional nutrition options may be available for those individuals under the age of 60 with qualifying disabilities. Please contact Dakota at Home at 1-833-663-9673 to learn more.

Groton City Election Date is Changed

NOTICE OF ELECTION DATE CHANGE

The Ward 2 election for the City of Groton has been postponed to Tuesday, June 2, 2020. This is the corresponding date of the 2020 presidential primary election. Two candidates are running for the open position: Troy Lindberg and Damian Bahr. In order to vote in this election, you must be a registered voter of Ward 2 in the City of Groton. If you are in doubt about your registration status, contact your local county auditor. Voter registration ends May 18, 2020.

On election day, the City will operate polling sites from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM at the Groton Community Center. With respect to COVID-19 issues, please make good health related decisions when voting on election day.

In-person absentee voting is available at City Hall by appointment only by calling 605-397-8422. Voters may vote in-person up until 5:00 PM on the day before the election.

To receive a South Dakota Absentee Ballot Application Form call City Hall, at 605-397-8422 or email city.hope@nvc.net. Forms are also available on-line at www.sdsos.gov.

Hope Block
Finance Officer
City of Groton



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The Dakotans working together

By **STEPHEN GROVES** Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem on Thursday encouraged people to use a mobile app that can retrace the steps of people who test positive for the virus.

The Care19 app was created in North Dakota by a Microsoft engineer, and was originally developed to help North Dakota State University football fans traveling to Texas. North Dakota rolled it out this week.

Noem said use of the app is voluntary and that it has privacy measures in place, including the ability to delete your data at any time. She explained it could help the Department of Health investigate the spread of infections and identify people who have come into contact with someone with the coronavirus.

Health officials reported 54 new confirmed cases of the coronavirus, bringing the state's total to 447. Officials reported no new deaths from COVID-19, but six people have died so far.

Minnehaha County, the state's most-populated area, saw the largest jump in confirmed infections, with 46 new cases. That county alone accounts for over 60% of all confirmed cases.

Many of the infections in Minnehaha have been linked to an outbreak at the Smithfield pork processing plant in Sioux Falls. Secretary of Health Kim Malsam-Rysdon said on Wednesday that over 80 employees have tested positive but declined to give an update on the number of confirmed cases on Thursday.

Smithfield is temporarily closing the plant starting on Saturday to clean and install physical barriers between workers.

Noem praised the action, saying it showed Smithfield cared about their workers.

"The Smithfield situation is a difficult one, and we're going to continue to do all that we can to make sure the situation is rectified and people's health is protected," she said.

The Republican governor said she has been encouraging businesses to find ways to stay open. But the state has not been able to avoid the massive layoffs seen around the country. Almost 8,000 people made new claims for unemployment last week.

"These numbers are historical in our state in the very worst way," Noem said, noting that she was not aware of a worse week since the state started tracking unemployment data.

Places You've Visited



Congratulations! Your phone is correctly configured to collect location data.

We haven't detected any visited places yet. Our goal is to only collect visits where you stop for at least 15 minutes. This is in line with CDC guidelines.

If you are prompted in the future, please select "ALWAYS ALLOW" for location collection.



Visited Places



Participants



About

I got this message this morning on my phone so I clicked on "ALWAYS ALLOW." Last night when I checked, there were 615 participants in South Dakota. This morning, there are 2,606.

Currently, it's only available on the Apple App store. The android version is coming soon.

Potential COVID-19 Exposure in Lane, SD

PIERRE, S.D. – State Health officials announced today that a worker at the Lane Café in Lane has tested positive COVID-19. The individual reported working April 1 through April 4 while able to transmit the virus to others.

Due to the risk of exposure, customers who visited the café during those dates should monitor for symptoms for 14 days after the date they visited. A CDC screening tool is available at [COVID.SD.GOV](https://www.cdc.gov/covid19/screeningtool/), which can help recommend when to call your medical provider if you develop symptoms.

State Health officials remind all South Dakotans to:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Refrain from touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects.
- Individuals at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness, such as older adults and people who have chronic medical conditions like heart, lung or kidney disease, should take actions to reduce your risk of exposure.
- Create a family plan to prepare for COVID-19 and develop a stay at home kit with food, water, medication, and other necessary items.

If you develop symptoms:

- Call your health care provider immediately.
- Individuals who are concerned they have COVID-19 should contact their healthcare provider via phone before going to a clinic or hospital to prevent spread in healthcare facilities.
- Avoid contact with other people.
- Follow the directions of your provider and public health officials.

For more information and updates related to COVID-19 visit the [COVID.SD.GOV](https://www.covid.sd.gov) or [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-997-2880.

Governor Noem Signs Executive Order to Extend COVID-19 Emergency Declaration

PIERRE, S.D. - Today, Governor Kristi Noem signed an extension of her previous executive orders to continue South Dakota's fight against the spread of COVID-19.

The new Executive Order (EO 2020-15) extends Governor Noem's initial State of Emergency declaration from March 13th. A State of Emergency declaration allows the governor to activate certain emergency powers so that the governor and state agencies can respond to this emergency to the fullest extent necessary and use all resources available to fight the virus' spread. The Executive Order also clarifies that other previous executive orders are extended through the duration of this emergency.

The State of Emergency in South Dakota is now extended until May 31, 2020.

To learn more about executive orders to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, please visit [COVID.sd.gov](https://www.covid.sd.gov).

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Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller

Things continue to improve, at least in the overall picture and in the places which have been hot spots for a while. We now have 463,394 reported cases in 50 states + DC and 4 US territories, an 8.3% increase over yesterday. This shows a sustained decrease in the rate of growth. This matters, and it demonstrates all these hard things we're doing every day are making a difference—a big one.

Highest numbers are as follows: NY – 159,937, NJ – 51,027, MI – 21,375, CA – 20,088, MA – 18,941, PA – 18,379, LA – 18,283, FL – 16,819, IL – 16,422, and TX – 11,293. NY and NJ together hold at close to half (46%) of cases; the top 10 have fallen off to 76% and may soon fall below three-quarters. We have 6 more states over 5000 cases reported, 21 more + DC reporting over 1000, 7 more + PR reporting over 500, 6 more + GU reporting over 100, and only VI and MP reporting less than 100 cases.

Deaths are now up to 16,688 reported in 49 states, DC, and 4 US territories. NY has 7-67, NJ 1700, MI 1076, LA 702, CA 544, IL 534, MA 503. We have 12 more states reporting over 100 deaths, 11 more reporting over 50, 13 more+ DC and PR reporting over 10. 6 states + GU, MP, and VI report less than 10 deaths. Wyoming has still not reported a death.

So rates of increase in case reports are remaining well below 10% in the nation and in the two hardest-hit states, and the rate of increase in number of deaths is trending downward toward 10%. The damage is still huge, but we do appear to be heading in the right direction. We'll see what the rest of the week brings.

A couple of days ago, I got a question about mixing up a bleach solution to use as a disinfectant. Here's some helpful information on that subject:

You want to mix 4 tsp. bleach (1 Tbsp.+ 1 tsp.) per quart of water or 1 tsp. bleach per cup of water.

Be sure the bleach is not expired; it loses effectiveness 9 months after the date of manufacture. It's actually at full potency only for about 6 months and declines after that. Given it takes a few weeks to get from the factory to the store where you buy it, the window in which it's good is pretty narrow. Very short life: Chlorine just isn't very stable in solution, and there isn't much you can do about it except not to buy bleach in huge bottles unless you use a lot.

It does keep better if not exposed to light (which is why the white opaque bottles) and if protected from extreme temperatures; keeping it in a very warm house or leaving it in the garage to freeze seriously shortens its life. Companies actually mix it stronger in the summer because they know it's going to ship in the heat; it's that sensitive. If your bleach is not effective, then you need to throw it away and buy more. Don't rely on expired stuff when it matters.

Most manufacturers stamp a code on each bottle that, if you know what to look for, gives you date of manufacture. Here's what it says on the Clorox website about theirs: "The top line has a letter followed by a 7 digit code. The letter and first number are producing plant identification; the next 4 digits are a Julian production code and the final 2 digits are a shift identification. . . . Thus, a code A8809507 would be Clorox® Regular-Bleach with CLOROMAX® made in plant A8 on 8095 (8 for 2008 and 095 for the 95th day or April 4th)." Any other manufacturer should have similar information on its web site; I just looked this one up as an example.

For the record, NEVER mix bleach with any other cleaners; it makes toxic fumes in combinations. And please note that any bleach solution you mix up retains full potency as a disinfectant for only about 24 hours. Might want to just make small quantities each morning and throw whatever's left away each night.

Be aware that many household cleaners are effective against SARS-CoV-2 as well. There's a complete list of those evaluated on the CDC's website, but most that are labeled as bathroom or kitchen disinfectants work great. Additionally, soap and water are damaging to coronaviruses. I recommend you wet a surface with whatever you're using, then let it sit a minute or so before wiping dry; this gives the cleaner time to work.

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I've been hearing a lot of scary talk about how this SARS-CoV-2 virus is mutating so fast that we'll never get ahead of it, that immunity from a prior infection or a future vaccination will be doomed to failure, that it's going to suddenly take a turn for the worse and we'll all be dead soon. So I thought I'd address this.

Short answer: Yes, this virus absolutely does mutate. No, you don't need to worry about that.

In a world where movies show the dire effects of mutations, for example, the creation of monsters like zombies (or cool things like the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles), it's easy to freak out about mutation; but the reality is far more mundane. Fact is, the genetic code in any organism, from a virus to a fern to a human, contains huge amounts of information, all of it telling a cell how to make proteins because it turns out proteins are in charge of every single damned cell operation there is. There's a cool chemical "language" involved in the coding and a cool set of means by which proteins get to run everything, but we're not here for a course in molecular genetics, so I'm just going to ask you to believe me on this (even the part about it being cool) and give you the high points.

The part we're interested in is that proteins are made up simply of long strings of building blocks called amino acids. (Picture a long necklace of variously colored, sized, and shaped beads; the necklace is the protein, and the beads are amino acids. Some of these beads are attracted to specific others of these beads.) So the cell hooks a bunch of these amino acids together in a chain, and then an amino acid at one place along the chain will get attracted to an amino acid a ways farther along, so they'll interact and sort of stick together, creating a fold or a bend or a loop in the chain. Then another amino acid somewhere else on the chain gets attracted to one at a different spot, and they interact, creating another fold or loop. This sort of thing repeats, sometimes folding the folds, until you have a protein with a very specific (and completely predictable) shape. And the shape of a protein molecule was determined by just where along the chain this or that amino acid is—because that's what determines which spot on the chain folds up to get next to which other spot on the chain. This final shape is vital to its function. If you want a "good," working protein, you want it to have the right shape. Because that shape depends on those folds, it's pretty important to get the sequence of amino acids right.

The genetic code tells the cell which amino acids it should be putting into the protein and in which order. This code has just four "letters" in its alphabet; a string of nucleic acid (DNA or RNA) has these four letters in various sequences. The protein-making machinery "reads" those letters in three-letter "words" called codons. If you do the math, turns out there are 64 possible three-letter codons you can make using all the possible combinations of four letters. Three of these 64 codons give the instruction, "End the protein here." The other 61 specify which amino acid which should be added to the string you're building.

There are just 20 amino acids in nature. We have 61 codons available to code for them. This means several codons might code for the same amino acid, that is, there's a lot of redundancy built into the code. In addition, not every amino acid in a protein is shape-critical; some of them sort of come along for the ride without having much at all to do with shape.

So with this background, let's examine what a mutation consists of. It generally happens when we're making new copies of the nucleic acid (DNA or RNA) so we can split off new cells. When we're building away on the NA, there can be copying errors—additions, deletions, or substitutions of one "letter" for another. There are proofreading mechanisms built into the process, so most of these mistakes get caught early on before they have any effect at all, but some slip through. And now you have a codon with a wrong letter in it. What happens next?

Often nothing at all. Could be that mistake means we have a different codon that still specifies the same amino acid—because some amino acids have multiple codons, right? Or it could be we do get a wrong amino acid in our protein chain; but if that particular amino acid isn't one of those that's going to participate in the folding/bending thing, then the protein might have the same shape anyhow. Or even if the shape is changed, maybe the change is tiny and the protein still works just as well—or almost as

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well, and the owner never really notices. Some processes have two or more genes that code for them, so if one is defective and the others are still good, things can go merrily along. These are called polygenic traits, and they tend to be the important ones. Generally speaking, in nature, the most important things get the best protections.

Now once in a long while, the change is substantial. Maybe mutation is fatal. Or renders the virus unable to reproduce. In those cases, we no longer have to worry about it because this virus is done causing us trouble. Or maybe it does some new and wonderful/terrible (depending on your point of view) thing that makes it way easier to survive and thrive. That we'd care about; but those aren't the usual run of things—a whole lot of accidents have to fall into place just right to get that result. It happens, but not all that often. A whole lot of mutations are pretty meaningless in the scheme of things. They just don't make much difference. So there you are.

This virus is mutating (So are you, if you care.) Mostly we don't care, that is, we care because it helps us track the virus (which we'll talk about in a minute), but we don't have to really care about mutation in terms of us getting sick.

Because that's where we started this conversation—worrying about whether our immunity to the virus after infection or after vaccination would hold. This is because the thing on the virus to which we have an immune response, called an antigen, is—you guessed it—a protein, and if the protein is changing much or fast, that could be a problem. Because, like everything else with proteins, your ability to recognize those antigens depends on their shape. So if the shape is much changed, maybe your immune system has some trouble recognizing the virus as an old, familiar enemy and has a too-sluggish response. But this sort of thing isn't terribly common. (What's going on with flu virus—one whose antigens do change shape all the time, which is why you need a new vaccine every fall—is something different called recombination. We'll leave that subject alone for the moment. It's sort of complicated.)

The genome of this SARS-CoV-2 virus has been very extensively studied in the short time we've had, and it's too soon to know for sure, but it looks very much like this is a relatively stable virus. That is, it is mutating, but not very fast and not in ways we need to be worried about. It does have some proofreading capability, which is helpful, and the long view is that it has been pretty much the same virus wherever it's turned up. The relatively stability we've seen indicates the virus is unlikely to become more dangerous. I view this as a good thing; I think the virus is already dangerous enough. Guessing you agree.

While there has been enough genetic variation for us to track it, the overall error rate or pace of mutation has been very small. This virus has around 30,000 base pairs ("letters") in its genome, and in all the time it's been circulating, the widest difference we've seen between two strains was seen in just 11 out of those 30,000 base pairs. That's minute.

So now that we don't have to fret about rampaging mutant viruses coming after us, we're left to discover what we can about Covid-19's travels around the world from the mutations we are seeing. A couple of projects have studied at least 1000 samples of the virus from 36 countries on six continents. From this, we've concluded the virus began spreading in the US in January. At least one strain or lineage, maybe more, was introduced that month in Washington, well before that first case showed up on January 20. There have been Wuhan-linked lineages in WA; later some other lineages showed up in WA from Europe. It is clear that the earlier and later cases in NY were not linked, that is, they came from different places. The first cases were from Europe with some later cases associated with the same lineage as circulated in WA. From the pattern and dates of lineages showing up in WA and NY, we conclude the various lineages of this virus have been moving from coast to coast for at least several weeks. We are also concluding there was a period of untracked global transmission between late January and mid-February. I'm guessing someone will, one day, produce a map that shows just how various lineages of SARS-CoV-19 hitchhiked around the country from Detroit to St. Louis to Minneapolis or wherever, showing dates of spread and all kinds of interesting information. But that's for the future.

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Another thing that these comprehensive genomic studies has cleared up is the early talk that there were two distinct strains with different virulence patterns, a so-called L strain and an S strain, a theory I reported on here some weeks back. This is now debunked. None of the lineages studied is significantly different enough from the others to account for variation in virulence pattern. So although there are these subtle differences in the sequence of letters in the various lineages' genetic coding, these things that enable us to construct phylogenetic trees (a sort of "family tree") for the virus, they're all still the same virus: same infectivity, same transmissibility, same virulence, same outcomes. And, importantly, they're going to be susceptible to the same antibodies. It's early days yet, but none of this looks likely to change.

It might help to remember that we have some experience with RNA viruses besides that freaky influenza virus. We have vaccines for yellow fever, measles, and mumps, all RNA-virus diseases, some of which are 70 years old, and they're still working. We'll know more as we go along, but so far, this doesn't look like it's going to be a whole lot different on the vaccine front. Once we have a vaccine. So we wait.

We have come a long way. We might just get even with this thing soon; several states are looking at peaks in the next several days. We simply must keep on with all of the measures we are taking to limit spread; it would be criminal to let up now and have to start all over again in a week or two weeks or a month. If you haven't been doing so much, now would be a great time to get on the bandwagon; it's not too late to make a difference, but it's getting there. When this thing is over and people sit around talking with satisfaction about how their sacrifices were worth it, how they saved lives, you do not want to be the asshole in the corner mumbling in you sleeve because you didn't sacrifice one single damned thing for the common good. And people will know. They will see you for the person who couldn't be bothered to do a simple thing for your fellow humans. They will judge you harshly for that. I will too.

Those with teenaged children in the house, I understand how they're feeling: ripped-off, cheated of their high school experience, desperate to see their friends. And these are all 100% valid feelings. They have been ripped-off and cheated of something valuable they cannot get back. And they need their friends in a way we adults do not fully understand unless we remember being 16 or 17 or 18. None of this is trivial or childish or foolish. It may help to remember that two months is over 1% of a 16-year old's life thus far; it's only 0.2% of mine—a rounding error. It's a longer time for them than it is for you too. Show them some grace, even when they don't show you much; and the rest of us will then endeavor to show you some grace because you're suffering too—for them and at their hands. If you know one of these kids—if you're a grandparent or a beloved uncle or a big sister or a cousin—reach out. Give that kid someone with whom to rail at the essential unfairness of it all. Because it is unfair. And it hurts. And do something nice for Mom and Dad. We're not just trying to survive; we're trying to build a better society here. We need all hands on deck for that every much as we do to limit this menace.

Do your bit. Stay healthy. And I'll see you all tomorrow.

ATTORNEY GENERAL RAVNSBORG WARNS OF STIMULUS SCAMS

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakota Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg is urging all South Dakotans to be on the lookout for a surge of calls, emails, and text messages related to the federal government's economic impact payments to citizens.

"These scammers are trying to make you believe they can obtain your stimulus funds quicker for you," said Ravnsborg. "The IRS will NOT be reaching out to consumers to verify what account you'd like your funds to go into. The IRS will NOT send an email or text, to tell you something is wrong with your returns so they can't process your stimulus check. Bottom line is IRS will NOT be contacting consumers regarding the stimulus checks."

There are 5 definite "red flags" to watch for to help you identify a scammer:

1. Neither the IRS nor your bank will ever contact you for personal information;
2. You will never have to click through links in emails or text messages to get your money;
3. If you do not have direct deposit you will not need to have someone else set up your account;
4. You will never need to verify your check amount to anyone; and
5. You will never be threatened.

If you should receive any communication in this manner please contact the Consumer Protection Division at 800-300-1986 or email at consumerhelp@state.sd.us. You can also contact the National Center for Disaster Fraud, a part of the United States Department of Justice at 1-866-720-5721 or email at disaster@leo.gov

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The Office of the Attorney General is the chief legal office for the State of South Dakota and provides legal advice to agencies, boards, and commissions of the State as well as representing the State in state and federal court. The Office of Attorney General also handles prosecutions, felony criminal appeals, civil matters, consumer protection issues, and issues formal opinions interpreting statutes for agencies of the state. Visit www.atg.sd.gov to learn more.

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AREA COVID-19 CASES

	Mar. 29	Mar. 30	Mar. 31	Apr. 1	Apr. 2	Apr. 3	Apr. 4	Apr. 5	Apr. 6	Apr. 7
Minnesota	503	576	629	689	742	789	865	935	986	1,069
Nebraska	120	153	177	214	255	285	323	367	412	478
Montana	161	177	198	217	241	263	281	298	319	319
Colorado	2,307	2,627	2,966	3,342	3,728	4,173	4,565	4,950	5,172	5,429
Wyoming	87	95	120	137	150	166	187	200	212	221
North Dakota	98	109	126	147	159	173	186	207	225	237
South Dakota	90	101	108	129	165	187	212	240	288	320
United States	143,055	164,610	189,633	216,722	245,573	278,458	312,245	337,933	368,079	399,929
US Deaths	2,513	3,170	4,081	5,137	6,058	7,159	8,503	9,653	10,923	12,911

Minnesota	+62	+73	+53	+60	+53	+47	+76	+70	+51	+83
Nebraska	+12	+33	+24	+37	+41	+30	+38	+44	+45	+66
Montana	+14	+16	+20	+19	+25	+22	+18	+17	+21	0
Colorado	+246	+320	+339	+376	+386	+445	+392	+385	+222	+257
Wyoming	+3	+8	+25	+17	+13	+16	+21	+13	+12	+9
North Dakota	+4	+11	+17	+21	+12	+14	+13	+21	+18	+12
South Dakota	+22	+11	+7	+21	+36	+12	+25	+28	+48	+32
United States	+18,369	+21,555	+25,023	+27,089	+28,851	+32,885	+33,787	+25,688	+30,146	+31,850
US Deaths	+322	+657	+911	+1,056	+921	+1,101	1,344	+1,150	+1,270	+1,988

	Apr. 8	Apr. 9
Minnesota	1,154	1,242
Nebraska	523	577
Montana	332	354
Colorado	5,655	6202
Wyoming	230	239
North Dakota	251	269
South Dakota	393	+447
United States	431,838	466,396
US Deaths	14,768	16,703

Minnesota	+85	+88
Nebraska	+45	+54
Montana	+13	+22
Colorado	+226	+547
Wyoming	+9	+9
North Dakota	+14	+18
South Dakota	+73	+54
United States	+31,909	+34,558
US Deaths	+1,857	+1,935

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Dakotas COVID-19 Update

Brown County has gained one more positive case, making the total now at 14. Corson and Jerauld counties have reported their first positive cases.

Positive Cases: +54 (447 total)
 Negative Cases: +345 (6,700 total)
 Ever Hospitalized: +1 (27 total)
 Recovered: +15 (161 total)
 Deaths: 6 (no change)

A person is considered in close proximity when they are six feet away for five minutes, according to officials from the SD Dept. of Health.

Brown: +1 Positive (14 total)
 Codington: +4 Recovered (10 of 12 recovered)
 Corson: 1st Positive Case
 Hughes: +1 positive (4 total)
 Jerauld: 1st Positive Case
 Lincoln: +2 positive, +4 recovered (15 of 33 recovered)
 Minnehaha: +46 positive, +7 recovered (48 of 274 recovered)
 Pennington: +1 positive (7 total)
 Yankton: +1 positive (17 total)

The N.D. DoH & private labs are reporting 438 completed tests today for COVID-19, with 18 new positive cases, bringing the statewide total to 269. NDDoH reports one new death.

State & private labs have reported 8,990 total tests with 8,721 negatives.

101 ND patients are recovered.

County	Total Positive Cases	# Recovered
Aurora	1	1
Beadle	21	19
Bon Homme	3	1
Brookings	6	5
Brown	14	9
Charles Mix	2	1
Clark	1	1
Clay	6	3
Codington	12	10
Corson	1	0
Davison	3	3
Deuel	1	1
Fall River	1	1
Faulk	1	1
Hamlin	1	0
Hughes	4	3
Hutchinson	2	2
Jerauld	1	0
Lake	2	0
Lawrence	9	8
Lincoln	33	15
Lyman	2	1
Marshall	1	1
McCook	2	1
Meade	1	1
Minnehaha	274	48
Oglala Lakota	1	0
Pennington	7	5
Roberts	4	3
Spink	3	2
Todd	1	1
Turner	5	1
Union	3	1
Yankton	18	12

SOUTH DAKOTA CASE COUNTS	
Test Results	# of Cases
Positive*	447
Negative**	6700
Pending***	0

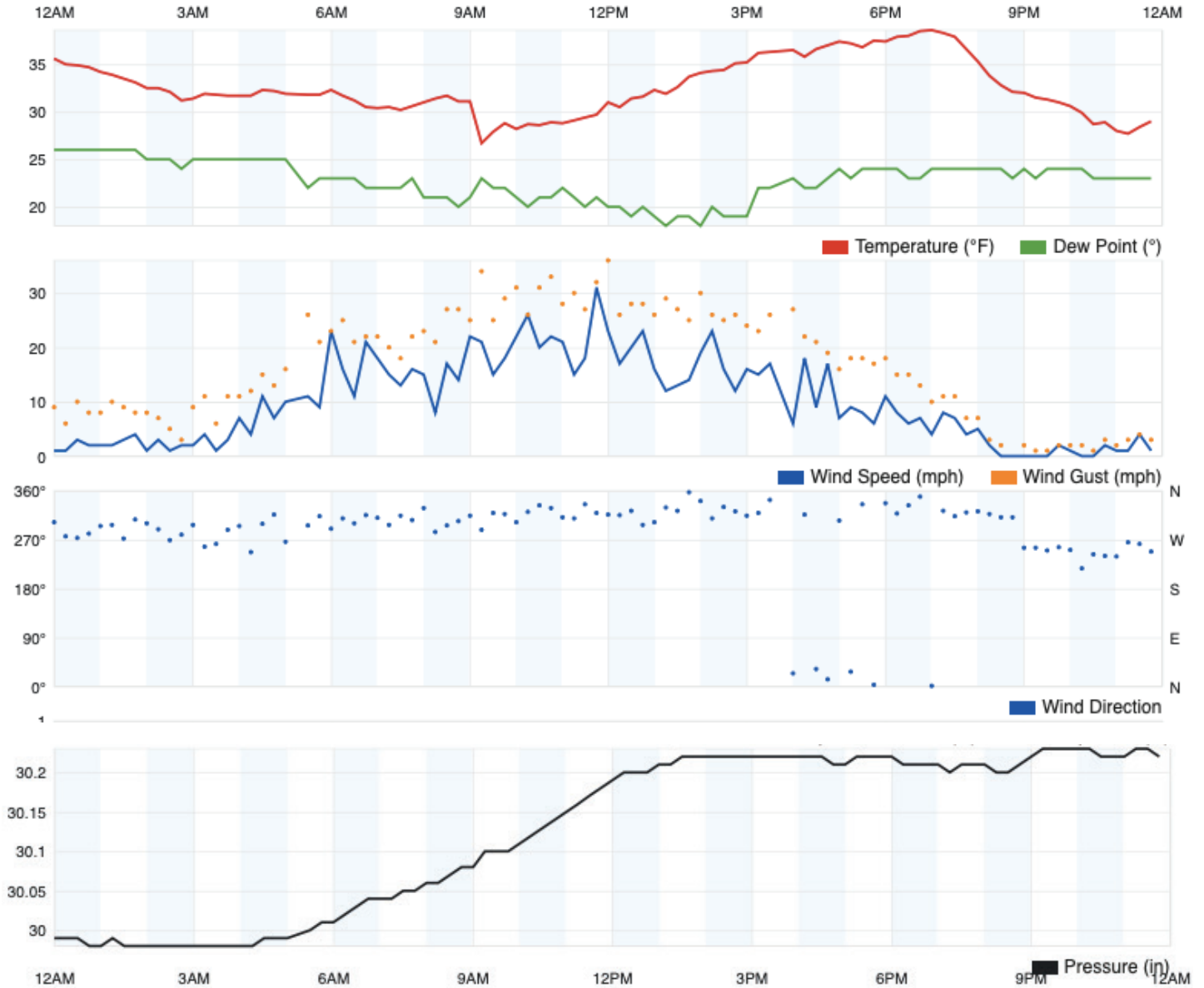
COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA	
Number of Cases	447
Ever Hospitalized*	27
Deaths**	6
Recovered	161

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0 to 19 years	14	0
20 to 29 years	87	0
30 to 39 years	103	0
40 to 49 years	70	0
50 to 59 years	96	2
60 to 69 years	58	1
70 to 79 years	11	1
80+ years	8	2

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Partly Sunny

High: 56 °F

Tonight



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 32 °F

Saturday



Breezy.
Mostly Cloudy
then Chance
Rain

High: 46 °F

Saturday
Night



Slight Chance
Rain then
Cloudy

Low: 27 °F


Sunday





Mostly Cloudy
then Mostly
Cloudy and
Breezy

High: 38 °F

**Near Normal Temps Today
Turning Colder This Weekend**

 Today: Mostly Clear. Highs: 50s east to 60s west

 Saturday: Increasing Clouds. Breezy & Falling Temps. Afternoon Showers.
Highs: 40s

 Sunday: Cloudy. Breezy.
Morning Snow (Western/Southern South Dakota)
Highs: Mid & Upper 30s

ISSUED: 3:17 AM - Friday, April 10, 2020, National Weather Service, Aberdeen SD

Expect temperatures to briefly return to normal before the next cold snap. A system moving across the area could bring some light rain Saturday and snow for early morning Sunday (mainly in western and southern South Dakota). Colder temperatures will dominate next week.

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Today in Weather History

March 10, 2005: High winds of 35 to 45 mph with gusts to near 70 mph occurred across all of central and northeast South Dakota from early morning to early evening. The high winds overturned a semi-truck near Mound City; knocked a large branch down onto a pickup truck in Selby; blew a glass door of a store in Clark off; tore a sign down in Aberdeen, and ripped the roof off a mobile home in South Shore.

March 10, 2009: A low-pressure system tracking across the panhandle of Oklahoma into the Great Lakes region produced moderate to heavy snow across northeast South Dakota from the morning to the evening of the 10th. Strong north to northwest winds gusting to 45 mph resulted in blizzard conditions. Travel became difficult, if not, impossible across northeast South Dakota. Interstate 29 between Watertown and the North Dakota border was closed for several hours. Several minor accidents occurred, along with some injuries. Snowfall amounts included; 3 inches near Milbank; 4 inches near Columbia, Summit, and at Sisseton; 5 inches at Waubay and Wilmot; 6 inches 10 miles northeast of Sisseton, Britton, and Roy Lake; 7 inches in Webster and Westport.

Bitter cold air filtered in behind the low-pressure system bringing record cold to the area. On the 11th, Aberdeen and Sisseton broke their record low highs for the date with afternoon highs only reaching zero. The record at Aberdeen had been in place since 1896. Sisseton also set a record low of 14 degrees below zero on March 12th.

1884: John Park Finley issued the first experimental tornado prediction. Finley had studied the atmospheric parameters that were present during previous tornadoes. Many of these same criteria are still used by operational forecasters today. But the use of tornado forecasts would be banned just a few years later and would remain banned until 1952.

1986: Severe thunderstorms and tornadoes hit Indiana, Kentucky, and Ohio. A total of 19 tornadoes occurred. Three of the tornadoes in Indiana reached F3 intensity. A densely populated subdivision of Southeast Lexington, Kentucky, was heavily damaged by a tornado. Twenty people were injured, and 900 homes were destroyed or demolished. A very strong thunderstorm downburst hit the Cincinnati area. At the Greater Cincinnati Airport, windows were blown out of the control tower, injuring the six controllers on duty. At Newport, Kentucky, 120 houses were destroyed from winds estimated from 100 to 140 mph.

1989: Thirty-four cities in the central and southwestern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. The high of 85 degrees at Hanksville, Utah, was a record for March, and Pueblo, Colorado, equaled their March record of 86 degrees. Hill City, Kansas warmed from a morning low of 30 degrees to an afternoon high of 89 degrees.

1926 - A hurricane came inland near Daytona Beach, FL. The hurricane caused 2.5 million dollars damage in eastern Florida, including the Jacksonville area. (David Ludlum)

1939 - The temperature at Lewiston, ID, hit 117 degrees to establish an all-time record high for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1943 - On a whim, and flying a single engine AT-6, Lieutenant Ralph O'Hair and Colonel Duckworth were the first to fly into a hurricane. It started regular Air Force flights into hurricanes. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms in Minnesota spawned a tornado which moved in a southwesterly direction for a distance of thirty miles across Rice County and Goodhue County. Trees were uprooted and tossed about like toys, and a horse lifted by the tornado was observed sailing horizontally through the air. Thunderstorms drenched La Crosse, WI, with 5.26 inches of rain, their second highest 24 hour total of record. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Hot weather prevailed in the north central U.S. Williston, ND, reported a record high of 108 degrees. Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the eastern U.S., and in southeastern Texas. Richland County, SC, was soaked with up to 5.5 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)

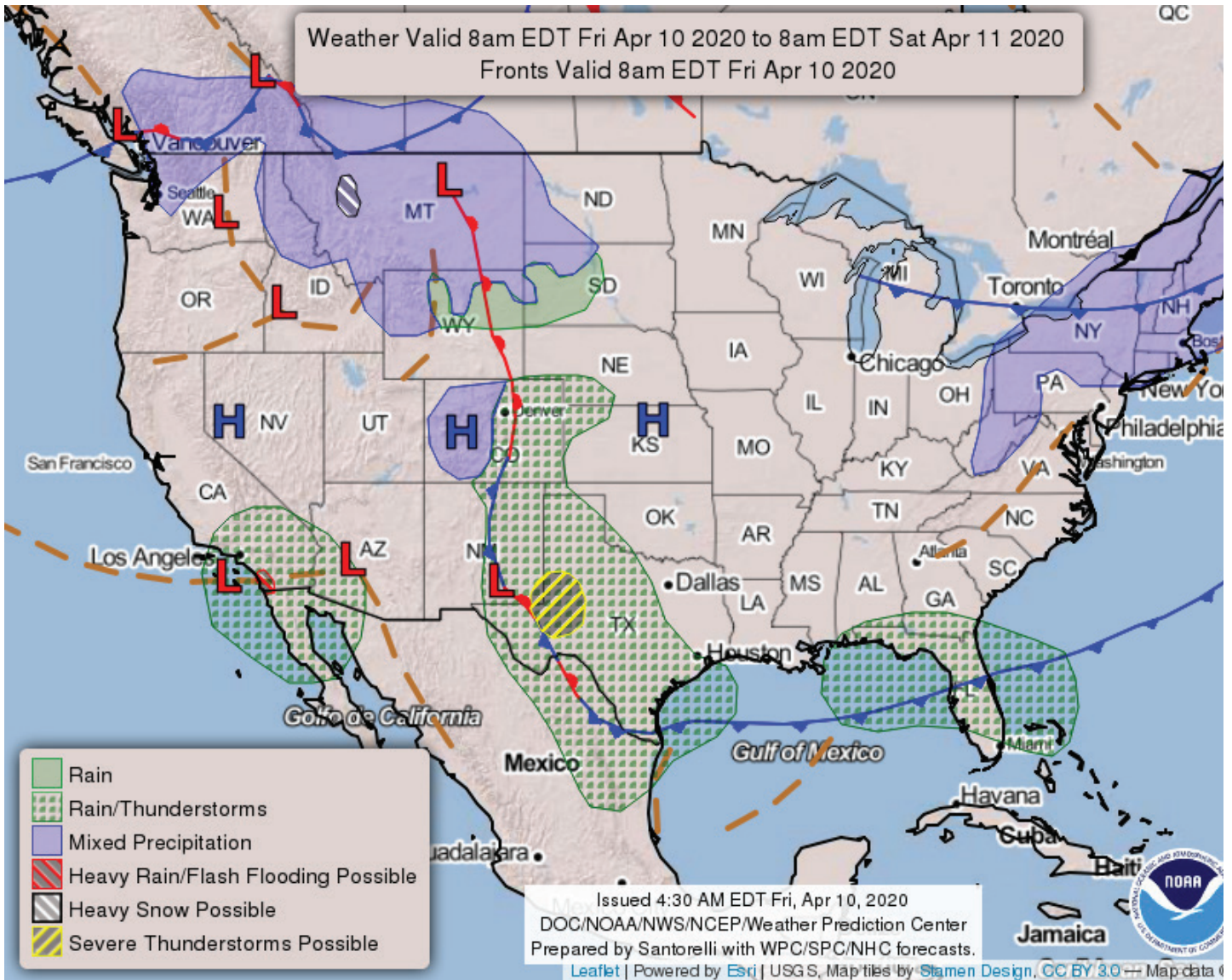
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 39 °F at 6:59 PM
Low Temp: 26 °F at 9:19 AM
Wind: 36 mph at 11:52 AM
Precip:

Record High: 88° in 1977
Record Low: 16° in 1997
Average High: 54°F
Average Low: 30°F
Average Precip in April.: 0.42
Precip to date in April.: 0.94
Average Precip to date: 2.60
Precip Year to Date: 1.29
Sunset Tonight: 8:14 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:55 a.m.



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TODAY IS NOT TOMORROW

Abraham Lincoln spent years as a circuit-riding lawyer. On one of his trips, he and a friend were faced with crossing the dangerous Fox River. While traveling through a small village he decided to ask a minister about the best place to cross it.

"Well," said the minister, "it's always pretty bad. And I am familiar with all its dangers. But I have one fixed rule that I never change: I never cross it until I reach it."

Planning for tomorrow is time well spent. But worrying about what might happen tomorrow is a foolish use of our time. When we worry, we close our eyes and ears and cannot see or hear our Heavenly Father at work in our lives. So what do we do?

First, we must release the problem to the Lord in prayer. We must hand the problem to Him as a quarterback hands off the football to a running back. The football can only get to its final destination when it is let go. So, in prayer, we must "let go and let God!"

Second, we must fix our thoughts on the power of God to solve the problem that came from God. We must allow His Spirit to guide us and give us His insight to solve His problem.

Third, we must activate our faith and believe that God will lead us to the solution that He has for us - not necessarily the solution we want. To combat worry and anxiety we must take God's promises at face value. If we are willing to let Him do "His thing" He will in His time.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to believe that You will solve our problems and take away our anxieties when we look to You in faith believing. Help us see Your will in our lives. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Matthew 6:33-34 Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. "So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today."

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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)
 - **POSTPONED** 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

News from the Associated Press

The Latest: Masks required at base commissary, facilities

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The Latest on the coronavirus outbreak in South Dakota (all times local): 7:40 a.m.

All customers and employees at the Ellsworth Air Force Base commissary and Army and Air Force Exchange facilities are required to wear face coverings to help limit the spread of the coronavirus.

The Defense Commissary Agency announced the new policy Thursday, making face masks mandatory for facilities worldwide starting Friday.

The 28th Bomb Wing commander directed the policy be delayed until Saturday at Ellsworth to ensure all were aware of the change.

The Rapid City Journal reports the base is expecting a shipment of face masks for distribution to Ellsworth personnel next week.

The South Dakota Department of Health reported 447 people have tested positive for COVID-19 in the state, with eight cases originating in the counties immediately adjacent to Ellsworth.

Drums, dancers livestream as virus moves powwows online

By **FELICIA FONSECA** Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — The names pop up quickly on Whitney Rencountre's computer screen, and he greets them as he would in person.

What's up, y'all? Shout out to you. How's it going? Ya'at'eeh. Good to see you, relatives.

He spots someone from the Menominee Nation, a Wisconsin tribe that hosts competitive dancers, singers and drummers in traditional regalia in late summer.

"Beautiful powwow there," he says.

The emcee from the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe in South Dakota typically is on the powwow circuit in the spring, joining thousands of others in colorful displays of culture and tradition that are at their essence meant to uplift people during difficult times. Amid the coronavirus pandemic, the gatherings are taking on a new form online.

"Sometimes we have this illusion that we're in total control, but it takes times like this of uncertainty and the challenges of the possibility of death to help us step back and reevaluate," said Rencountre, a co-organizer of the Facebook group Social Distance Powwow, which sprung up about a month ago as more states and tribes advised people to stay home.

Normally this time of year, a string of powwows hosted by Native American tribes and universities would be underway across the U.S., with tribal members honoring and showcasing their cultures — and socializing, like family reunions. The powwows represent an evolution of songs and dances from when tribal traditions were forced underground during European settlement, Rencountre said.

The pandemic has canceled or postponed virtually all of them, including two of the largest in the U.S. — the Denver March Powwow and the Gathering of Nations in Albuquerque, New Mexico, held in April.

Social Distance Powwow has helped fill the void, quickly growing to more than 125,000 members.

Members from different tribal nations post photos and videos of themselves and loved ones dancing, often in their regalia. The page has become a daily dose of prayer, songs, dances, well wishes, humor and happy birthdays.

In one video, Jordan Kor sits in his vehicle after a shift at a San Jose, California, hospital emergency department. An old Dakota war song he learned as a child that can be a rallying cry was bouncing around his head. He pulls off his mask and cap and sings, slapping a beat on the steering wheel.

"The biggest ones, social distance, keep working in whatever it is that brings you joy and helps you keep connected," said Kor, who is Tarahumara and Wapetonwon Lakota. "And wash your hands!"

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The page also hosts a weekly, live powwow with the organizers — Rencountre, Stephanie Hebert and Dan Simonds — assembling a lineup of volunteer drum groups, singers and dancers for the hours-long event. This past weekend, Rencountre patched people in from across the country on the live feed.

A marketplace on the site lets vendors showcase their paintings, beadwork, jewelry, basketry and clothing.

An online powwow lacks some of the grandeur of being in person and seeing hundreds of performers fill an arena for the grand entry. It doesn't have a roll call of tribal royalty, singers and champion dancers. And it doesn't have categories for competitive dancing.

But it offers a way to keep people connected.

"When we dance, we are dancing for prayer and protection," said member Mable Moses of the Lumbee Tribe in North Carolina. "No matter what we do, may the Lord always protect us whether we're living or dying."

Moses learned to dance later in life and now competes in the "golden age" category at powwows. In a video of her Southern Traditional dance, she moves around a dogwood tree in her yard slowly but with high energy.

"Even though I'm 72, I'm like 29," she said.

Moses said the dance meant to calm people helps her cope with the fear surrounding the coronavirus, and the difficulty of staying away from others.

Tribal members also are posting elsewhere on social media, including youth hoop dancers from Pojoaque Pueblo in New Mexico.

For those viewing for the first time, Rencountre encourages an open mind.

"We ask them to break down the wall, to feel the dances, to feel the songs, as you're watching," he said. "Don't think about it from a technical point of view. Understand the creation of these songs and dances comes from a place of uplifting."

Leiha Peters grew up doing jingle dress dance meant for healing. The dress is characterized by cone-shaped jingles typically made from the lids of tobacco cans. Now, she does beadwork for her children's outfits and is a Seneca language teacher.

She recently posted a video of two of her children and their cousins doing smoke dance in the living room of her home on the Tonawanda Indian Reservation northeast of Buffalo, New York. Its origins are mixed as a dance for men to bless themselves before they went to battle and a way to clear smoke from traditional homes called longhouses, she said.

Her children grow up knowing the respect and the protocol that accompany the dance and its songs. They also have fun with it, sometimes competing in the family's backyard to win cups of Kool-Aid or bags of candy, Peters said.

"For them, dancing is medicine on its own. It's everything to us," she said. "It's energy, it's athleticism, it's staying healthy and living a better life with food choices. It's not easy doing what they do."

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

Smithfield temporarily shuts pork plant due to coronavirus

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Smithfield Foods pork processing plant in South Dakota will temporarily close for cleaning after more than 80 employees were confirmed to have the coronavirus, the company announced Thursday.

Smithfield Foods plans to suspend operations in a large section of the Sioux Falls plant on Saturday, then completely close on Sunday and Monday. The Virginia-based company said it will sanitize the plant and install physical barriers to "enhance social distancing."

South Dakota health officials have said more than 80 plant workers tested positive for COVID-19, while the union representing workers said more than 120 have confirmed infections.

The plant, which employs about 3,700 people in the state's largest city, has emerged as a hotspot of

infections, accounting for almost 30% of cases in Minnehaha County.

Smithfield Foods CEO Kenneth Sullivan said in a statement that the plant dishes out nearly 18 million servings of meat per day.

There has been no evidence that the coronavirus is being transmitted through food or its packaging, according to the Department of Agriculture.

Other meat processing plants have also closed temporarily because of outbreaks of the coronavirus, including a Tyson Foods facility in Columbus Junction, Iowa, where more than two dozen employees tested positive.

Sullivan said Smithfield Foods is taking "the utmost precautions and actions to ensure the health and wellbeing of our employees — with an even increased emphasis on our critical role in the ongoing supply of food to American families."

The company said it would pay employees who were scheduled to work the days it will be closed.

But employees and their family members expressed their frustration with Smithfield's actions so far in a socially-distanced protest outside the factory on Thursday night. They piled into dozens of cars decorated with handmade signs and circled the road outside the factory, honking their horns.

Nancy Reynoza, an organizer with ¿Que Pasa Sioux Falls?, a Latino community organization, said they organized the protest after hearing from workers at the plant that they were afraid to speak out about the lack of safety measures in place.

"Inside Smithfield, workers are not feeling safe," she said. "They're really fearing for their lives at this moment."

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.

South Dakota epidemiologist Josh Clayton said Smithfield has been testing employees for "nearly a week," working with the company's health care system.

Smithfield did not respond to questions on why it was waiting until Saturday to close the plant.

The United Food and Commercial Workers, which represents workers at the plant, said it had pushed for a partial closure after the first infection was confirmed. The union said it worked with Smithfield to get workers access to testing and paid leave for those who had contact with someone with the coronavirus.

Smithfield Foods spokeswoman Keira Lombardo said the company posted signs telling workers with symptoms to stay home and saying that they would not be penalized for missing work.

But the company also offered a \$500 bonus to hourly employees who did not miss work in April, a move that Kooper Caraway, the president of the AFL-CIO, which organizes local unions, said motivated workers to show up sick.

Tyson, Cargill and other major meat processing companies say they are taking a variety of precautions to keep workers safe, including taking the temperature of everyone entering their plants, adding clear plexiglass shields between work stations and erecting tents for more lunchroom space.

Sencore to release innovative, industry leading products, features and technologies - virtually

SIOUX FALLS, S.D., April 9, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- Sencore, the gateway to better video delivery, is eager to release and demo new industry leading products, features & technologies to our valued customers and partners over the next few months. Even though we will be unable to showcase in person (for now) our vast portfolio of video delivery equipment, system monitoring and analysis solutions, we are working on bringing those announcements/demos/launches directly to you, wherever you may be.

Beginning the end of April, Sencore will be holding weekly live online events with our knowledgeable Product Managers as hosts to our audience. Topics to focus on, but not limited to; ST 2110 – Pushing production to the next level, Transport over the Internet and ATSC 3.0 – it's here and we're ready. The objective of these online events is to educate on growing technologies in the industry as well as introduce

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new products and innovations we now offer as solutions to our valued customers.

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SOURCE Sencore

Remains identified as Rapid City woman missing since 2015

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Authorities have identified the human remains found recently near a creek on a golf course in Rapid City.

Police said the remains are those of a woman who disappeared in 2015. Malinda Ader was 35 when she went missing.

A grounds keeper at the Rapid City Elks Golf Course discovered a human skull on March 31. After the police were alerted, investigators searched the area and located most of the remains of what they said appeared to be an adult.

The Argus Leader reports positive identification was made through Ader's dental records.

She was last seen on May 31, 2015 by a friend visiting her in Rapid City. Family told police that Ader had a history of mental illness and drug abuse.

What you need to know today about the virus outbreak

By The Associated Press

Christians observed Good Friday without the solemn church services or emotional processions of past years, instead watching livestreams at home as the world remained locked down by the coronavirus pandemic.

The global death toll headed toward 100,000, with the confirmed number of infected people topping 1.6 million, according to Johns Hopkins University. Another 355,000 have recovered.

With economies hit hard by the pandemic, governments faced mounting pressure to restart some industries and fend off further economic devastation from the coronavirus.

Here are some of AP's top stories Friday on the world's coronavirus pandemic. Follow APNews.com/VirusOutbreak for updates through the day and APNews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak for stories explaining some of its complexities.

THE FIGHT FOR NEW YORK: Listen to AP's coronavirus podcast, "Ground Game: Inside the Outbreak," for an interview with three AP reporters who worked on "24 Hours: The Fight for New York," a multi-format package following 10 New Yorkers as they negotiate life in a city transformed by the virus.

WHAT'S HAPPENING TODAY:

— Even as nearly 17 million Americans sought unemployment benefits, a large number appear to be falling through the cracks. They can't get through jammed phone systems or finish their applications on overloaded websites. And now there is a whole new category of people seeking help — gig workers, independent contractors and self-employed people.

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— People who must continue working during the outbreak are performing a quiet calculus each day as they try to stay safe while commuting.

— Schools that feed millions of children from low-income families across the U.S. promised to keep providing meals during the pandemic. But cities big and small quickly ran into problems when food workers, teachers and volunteers became infected or were too scared to report for duty.

— As the coronavirus pandemic unfolds, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell flashes back to an earlier crisis that gripped the nation, and his own life, when he was a boy. He was stricken with polio. The two crises now bookend McConnell's years, making the Kentucky Republican an unexpected voice of personal reflection. "Why does this current pandemic remind me of that? I think No. 1 is the fear," he told The Associated Press.

— The coronavirus has infected so many doctors, nurses and other health workers that some in France, Italy and Spain are now quickly returning from their sick beds and heading back to the front lines. "We were trained for this. The world needs us," one doctor explained.

— Residents of Wuhan are adjusting to their new normal. In the Chinese city where the pandemic began, people are cautiously returning to outdoor life amid a raft of strict controls.

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.

IN OTHER NEWS:

— **THE HOWLING:** From California to New York, some Americans are taking a moment each night to howl as a way of thanking the health care workers and first responders. It's an American twist on the applause and singing for besieged health care workers in Europe.

— **SOCIAL DISTANCE POWWOWS:** With the largest powwows in the country canceled and postponed amid the spread of the coronavirus, tribal members have found a new outlet online with the Social Distance Powwow.

— **VIRTUAL SEDER:** Rabbi Shlomo Segal is among the spiritual leaders who are adapting to a Passover in the shadow of COVID-19. The 40-year-old self-described "liberal" Orthodox rabbi has brought his Seder to YouTube

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

Global pact to contain oil price crash takes shape

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The OPEC oil cartel and nations including Russia have agreed to boost oil prices by cutting as much as 10 million barrels a day in production, or a tenth of global supply. More countries, including the United States, were discussing Friday their own cuts in what would be an unprecedented global pact to stabilize the market.

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The agreement between OPEC and partner countries aims to cut 10 million barrels per day until July, then 8 million barrels per day through the end of the year, and 6 million a day for 16 months beginning in 2021.

Mexico had initially blocked the deal but its president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, said Friday that he had agreed with U.S. President Donald Trump that the U.S. will compensate what Mexico cannot add to the proposed cuts.

That paves the way for cuts that experts estimate could reach 15 million barrels a day in all - about 15% of world production. Such a move would be unprecedented both in its size and the number of participating countries, many of whom have long been bitter rivals in the energy industry.

The price of crude is down by over 50% since the start of the year and while that helps consumers and energy-hungry businesses, it is below the cost of production for many countries and companies. That has strained the budgets of oil-producing nations, many of which are developing economies, and it has pushed private companies in the U.S. toward bankruptcy.

Analysts warn even these proposed cuts may not be enough to offset the loss in demand over the longer term, as the coronavirus pandemic has decimated demand for energy around the world.

"COVID-19 is an unseen beast that seems to be impacting everything in its path," OPEC Secretary-General Mohammed Barkindo said at the start of the meeting, according to a statement. "There is a grizzly shadow hanging over all of us. We do not want this shadow to envelope us. It will have a crushing and long-term impact on the entire industry."

One breakthrough came after Mexico relented in its opposition to the deal, in which it was being asked to cut its output by 400,000 barrels a day. Mexican President Obrador said his country will instead cut its production by 100,000 barrels per day from its current level of 1.7 million barrels a day. The U.S. will add a cut of 250,000 barrels per day to what it has already agreed.

More nations were expected to add to the effort, with Saudi Arabia chairing a Group of 20 virtual meeting of energy ministers on Friday to discuss the oversupply in the market.

The meeting is expected to bring onboard a wider number of countries, including the United States. Saudi media quoted Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman as saying in his opening remarks that the pandemic means it is more vital than ever that reliable and affordable energy supplies are available. The meeting also includes representatives of OPEC.

Trump has spoken earlier with Russian President Vladimir Putin and King Salman of Saudi Arabia about the negotiations. The United States is interested in a deal because the oil price crash has caused thousands of job losses in the oil patch just as the virus outbreak is causing a record spike in unemployment.

"There's so much production nobody even knows what to do with it, that's how it's working," Trump said at a White House news briefing.

The oil market was already oversupplied when Russia and OPEC failed to agree on output cuts in early March. Analysts say Russia refused to back even a moderate cut because it would have only served to help U.S. energy companies that were pumping at full capacity. Stalling would hurt American shale-oil producers and protect market share.

Russia's move enraged Saudi Arabia, which not only said it would not cut production on its own but said it would increase output instead and reduce its selling prices in what became effectively a global pricing war.

In the time since, prices have collapsed as the coronavirus and the COVID-19 illness it causes have largely halted global travel. International benchmark Brent crude traded Friday over \$31 a barrel while the U.S. benchmark West Texas crude traded under \$23.

In Russia relies on oil as the main source of income and the price collapse caused the ruble to crash. That boosted the cost of imports and sped up inflation.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday that Russian President Vladimir Putin views "very positively" the result of the negotiations and added that Russia welcomes Mexico's decision to join the deal.

The agreement is a win for everyone, the world's economy would have "plunged into chaos" if the deal had been broken off, Peskov added.

Analysts warn the proposed 10 million barrel per day cut for May and June will not be enough to offset plummeting demand for oil globally, and runs the risk of coming too late as storage capacity for oil nears

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its maximum. Even if North American producers took 5 million barrels a day off the market, there could still be an excess supply of 5-10 million barrels per day.

Research firm Rystad Energy estimates the imbalance for April is 27.4 million barrels per day. The firm says global storage of crude is already close to being filled to the brim, estimating that on average 79% of the world's oil storage capacity is already full. Around 7.4 billion barrels of crude and products are in storage, including 1.3 billion currently on board tankers at sea.

Chris Midgley, global head of analytics for S&P Global Platts, said the proposed cuts are unlikely to have any significant impact on April supply, and thus run the risk of getting close to exhausting all available storage in May.

However, a cut of 10-15 million barrels per day is enough to prop up oil prices and helps to reduce strain on crude storage facilities, analysts said.

Associated Press writers Daria Litvinova and Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow, Cathy Bussewitz in New York, Aya Batrawy in Dubai and Christopher Sherman in Mexico City contributed to this report.

In a test of faith, Christians mark Good Friday in isolation

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Christians are commemorating Jesus' crucifixion without the solemn church services or emotional processions of past years, marking Good Friday in a world locked down by the coronavirus pandemic.

The chanting of a small group of clerics inside Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulcher echoed faintly through the heavy wooden doors, as a few people stopped and kneeled outside to pray. The centuries-old church, built on the site where Christians believe Jesus was crucified, buried and rose from the dead, is usually packed with pilgrims and tourists.

Later, four monks in brown robes and blue surgical masks prayed at the stations of the cross along the Via Dolorosa, the ancient route through the Old City where Jesus is believed to have carried the cross before his execution at the hands of the Romans. It runs past dozens of souvenir shops, cafes and hostels, nearly all of which are closed.

In ordinary times, tens of thousands of pilgrims from around the world retrace Jesus' steps in the Holy Week leading up to Easter. But this year, flights are grounded and religious sites in the Holy Land are closed as authorities try to prevent the spread of the virus.

James Joseph, a Christian pilgrim from Detroit dubbed "the Jesus guy" because he wears robes and goes about barefoot, lives near the Church of the Holy Sepulcher year-round. On Friday morning he had the plaza outside to himself. He said Good Friday has special meaning this year.

"The crucifixion is the saddest thing possible, and he felt what we feel right now," he said. "But thanks be to God. ... He rose from the dead and changed the world on Easter."

The new virus causes mild to moderate symptoms in most patients, who recover within a few weeks. But it is highly contagious and can be spread by those who appear healthy. It can cause severe illness and death in some patients, particularly the old and infirm.

In Rome, the torch-lit Way of the Cross procession at the Colosseum is a highlight of Holy Week, drawing large crowds of pilgrims, tourists and locals. It's been cancelled this year, along with all other public gatherings in Italy, which is battling one of the worst outbreaks.

The virus has killed more than 18,000 people in Italy and over 95,000 worldwide, according to data gathered by Johns Hopkins University.

Instead of presiding over the Way of the Cross procession, Pope Francis will lead a Good Friday ceremony in St. Peter's Square without the public.

Ten people — five from the Vatican's health office and five from a prison in Padua, in northern Italy, where infections are particularly widespread — will participate in the procession, which will circle several times around the obelisk in St. Peter's Square.

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On display in the square will be a wooden crucifix, famed for being carried in a procession during the plague that ravaged Rome in the early 16th century.

In Spain, which has also been hit especially hard, Good Friday is traditionally a day of celebrations, especially in the south. People traditionally fill the streets to watch processions of religious brotherhoods carrying heavy, elaborately decorated platforms bearing statues of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary.

There will be no festivities this year, as the country battles an outbreak that has claimed more than 15,000 lives. Many churches are instead holding services online.

"With the pandemic that we have due to the coronavirus, the people are once again remembering the story of Jesus," said Francisco Lucena, a member of a brotherhood in a town near the southern city of Córdoba.

In Paris, a ceremony was held in the charred and gutted interior of Notre Dame Cathedral, which was nearly destroyed by fire a year ago. The ceremony was closed to the public because of the virus lockdown and because the structure is not deemed safe for parishioners.

Archbishop Michel Aupetit and three other clergymen wore hard hats as they entered the damaged cathedral before taking them off for the ceremony. Standing before a large cross and beneath a gaping hole in the roof, they sang, prayed and venerated a crown of thorns that survived the flames.

Classical musician Renaud Capuçon played violin, the mournful notes echoing off the walls and pillars. Actors Judith Chemla and Philippe Torreton delivered readings, and Chemla sang a moving rendition of "Ave Maria." All three wore white protective overalls.

The bishop said the ceremony, which was broadcast live, showed that "life is still here," even as the pandemic is "spreading death and paralyzing us."

In the Philippines, Asia's bastion of Catholicism, masses and other solemn gatherings have been put on hold, including folk rituals that feature real-life crucifixions and usually draw thousands of tourists and penitents. The annual procession of the "Black Nazarene," a centuries-old statue of Jesus, through downtown Manila, has also been canceled.

Churchgoers have been told to stay home and remember Jesus' suffering through family prayers, fasting and by watching masses and religious shows on TV or online.

For Josille Sabsal, it's a test of faith. The 30-year-old Catholic missionary tried to replicate an altar in her Manila home by setting up a laptop, a crucifix and small statues of Jesus and the Virgin Mary on a table.

"It's different, because the priest is on a screen," she said. "When the internet lags, the mass suddenly gets cut off and you have to look for another YouTube video."

"I miss that moment in church when you say, 'Peace be with you,' to complete strangers and they smile back," she said.

Associated Press writers Frances D'Emilio in Rome, Sergio Rodrigo in Aguilar de la Frontera, Spain, John Leicester in Paris and Jim Gomez in Manila contributed to this report.

Economic devastation looms on a Good Friday like no other

By ARITZ PARRA and ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Christians around the world observed a Good Friday like no other, at home watching livestreams instead of at church, as pressure mounted on governments to restart some industries and fend off further economic devastation from the coronavirus.

Worldwide, the death toll closed in on 100,000, with the confirmed number of infected topping 1.6 million, according to Johns Hopkins University. The true numbers are believed to be much higher because of limited testing, different rules for counting the dead and cover-ups by some governments.

In addition to the lives lost, the pandemic has slammed economies around the world. The head of the International Monetary Fund has warned that the global economy is headed for the worst recession since the Depression. The U.N. labor organization said 195 million full-time jobs could be lost in the second quarter alone.

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In Europe, the 19 countries that use the euro currency overcame weeks of bitter divisions to agree on spending \$550 billion to cushion the recession caused by the virus. Mario Centeno, who heads the euro-zone finance ministers' group, called the package "totally unprecedented. ... Tonight Europe has shown it can deliver when the will is there."

As weeks of lockdowns were extended in nation after nation, governments were pressed to ease restrictions on key businesses and industries.

The Spanish government worked to establish a 20 billion-euro fund to help small businesses and the self-employed cope with the economic fallout. After a two-week freeze on all nonessential economic activity, factories and construction sites in Spain can resume work Monday, while schools, most shops and offices will remain closed.

Spanish authorities said they trust that plans to allow nonessential workers back into factories and construction sites won't cause a significant surge in infections.

"We wouldn't be adopting them otherwise," said María José Sierra of Spain's health emergency center.

Yet some experts warned that relaxing the two-week "hibernation" of economic activity comes too early.

In Italy, the industrial lobbies in regions representing 45% of the country's GDP urged the government to ease its lockdown on all nonessential manufacturing imposed two weeks ago.

The lobbies in Lombardy, Emilia Romagna, Piedmont and Veneto regions said that if their industries don't relaunch soon, "the country risks definitively shutting down its own motor, and every day that passes the risk grows not to be able to restart it."

Malaysia's prime minister announced a two-week extension to the country's lockdown until April 28 but said selected economic sectors can reopen in phases while following strict hygiene rules.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations endorsed several steps to fight the pandemic, including creating a COVID-19 response fund, sharing information and strategies to ease impact of the crisis that aid group Oxfam International estimates could push half a billion people worldwide into poverty.

In the Kenyan capital of Nairobi, people desperate for a planned food distribution stampeded, pushing through a gate at a district office in the Kibera slum. Police fired tear gas, injuring several people.

Travel restrictions in many African countries are creating widespread pain for low-income workers who often have little or no savings.

In a measure of just how fast the coronavirus is bringing world economies to their knees, a staggering 16.8 million Americans have lost their jobs in three weeks, with more expected to follow. The U.S. unemployment rate in April could hit 15% — a number not seen since the end of the Great Depression.

President Donald Trump brushed off fears the U.S. economy won't quickly rebound, saying he had a "strong feeling" that "the economy is going to do very well." The U.S. Federal Reserve announced it will provide up to \$2.3 trillion in loans for households and businesses.

In Japan, the world's third-largest economy, many have criticized Prime Minister Shinzo Abe for being too slow to action against the pandemic. In a rare rebuke, the Japanese prefecture of Aichi, home to the Toyota car company, declared its own state of emergency Friday, saying it cannot wait for the government.

"The situation is critical," said Aichi Gov. Hideaki Omura. "We decided to do everything we can to protect Aichi residents' lives and health."

Japan has the world's oldest population and COVID-19 can be especially serious for the elderly.

Toyota CEO Akio Toyoda said he is worried the Japanese economy might be destroyed before the world can win the fight against the virus.

In some of the worst-hit countries, Italy and Spain, new infections, hospitalizations and deaths have been leveling off. But the daily tolls remain shocking.

The 605 new deaths announced Friday in Spain were the lowest increase since March 24. The coronavirus has claimed at least 15,843 lives there and has officially infected 152,446 people, although both the rate of contagion and mortality are dropping.

Another sign of hope appeared in locked-down Paris, where fire-scarred Notre Dame Cathedral came back to life briefly days before the first anniversary of the April 15 inferno that ravaged the church. Good

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Friday observances led by the French capital's archbishop were broadcast live.

Politicians and public health officials have warned against jeopardizing hard-won gains against the pandemic by relaxing social distancing over the Easter holiday weekend. Some churches held virtual services online, while others arranged prayers at drive-in theaters.

Britain on Thursday recorded 881 new deaths, for close to 8,000 in all.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was moved out of intensive care after spending three nights there being treated for the virus. The 55-year-old remained hospitalized in London. His father, Stanley Johnson, said the prime minister needed to "rest up" and was unlikely to be back at work imminently.

A spike in deaths in Britain and New York show the battle is far from over.

New York state reported a record-breaking number of dead for a third straight day Thursday, 799. More than 7,000 people have died there, accounting for almost half the U.S. death toll of more than 16,500.

"That is so shocking and painful and breathtaking, I don't even have the words for it," New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said.

Becatoros reported from Athens, Greece. Associated Press journalists around the world contributed to this report.

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

The Latest: Eurogroup pledges \$550 Billion to help 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

- Good Friday observed at home ahead of Easter weekend.
- Dr. Fauci: Antibody tests expected next week in US.
- France aircraft carrier has 50 coronavirus cases.
- Notre Dame Cathedral will have its Good Friday ceremony with no crowd.

BRUSSELS — European heads of state and governments will meet by videoconference April 23 to confirm the agreement of the Eurogroup to support Europe's economies amid the global economic crisis.

The 19 European countries that use the euro currency overcame weeks of divisions to agree Thursday on more than half a trillion euros (\$550 billion) of support programs to cushion the recession caused by the deadly coronavirus.

European Council president Charles Michel says the package will help European Union countries, workers and businesses by shouldering "the burden of the crisis together." The compromise is aimed "at quick targeted relief."

WARSAW, Poland — Poland's media says authorities have fined a priest the equivalent of euro 2,200 (\$2,400) for celebrating Palm Sunday Mass for 60 people.

The mass took place in the southern mountain church in Sromowce Wyzne. No more than five people can attend Mass under Poland's strict anti-coronavirus measures.

Cycling and long walks are also forbidden. Last weekend in Krakow, a cyclist and a strolling woman were each fined euro 2,600 (\$2,800).

WASHINGTON — The top U.S. infectious disease official says coronavirus antibody tests are just days away.

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Dr. Anthony Fauci says at the last White House coronavirus task force meeting, the people responsible for developing, validating and disseminating the tests were saying "a rather large number of tests" will be available within a week.

An antibody test could show whether a person was recently exposed to the coronavirus. Fauci told CNN on Friday the test would say "that you were infected and if you're feeling well you very likely recovered."

Fauci says medical experts could then try to determine how deeply the virus has spread in the country and whether previously infected people would be vulnerable to reinfection, which is particularly "important for health care workers."

Fauci says testing for an antibody doesn't mean medical experts are shifting away from testing for the virus to see who's infected. He says, "those things are done in parallel."

NICOSIA, Cyprus — A soldier serving with the United Nations peacekeeping force in Cyprus is the first confirmed coronavirus case among UN personnel stationed there.

The UN says the soldier reported mild symptoms on Monday and was put into isolation after testing positive for the virus.

The UN says its following Cyprus government restrictions, including a stay-at-home order to help contain the spread.

Civilian UN staff are working from home, while the rotation and deployment of all soldiers has been put on hold in line with the UN Chief's suspension April 4 of deployments across all peace operations until Jun 30.

The UN's Cyprus mission of 802 soldiers, 69 police and 140 staff is one of the world body's oldest peace-keeping operations.

They patrol a 120-mile buffer zone separating a breakaway Turkish Cypriot north from an internationally recognized Greek Cypriot south.

PARIS — France's only aircraft carrier has confirmed 50 cases of the virus aboard and is heading back to port.

The French military says three of those aboard the Charles de Gaulle with the virus have been flown to a French hospital for treatment. Medics are staying aboard to track the infections and prevent further spread among the 1,700 crew after 50 of the 66 tests were positive.

U.S. aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt experienced a similar outbreak, leading to a major controversy after its captain was fired.

Amid suspicions of an outbreak aboard the Charles de Gaulle, a medical team equipped with tests was flown to the French aircraft carrier on Wednesday while it was on a mission in the Atlantic Ocean.

NAIROBI, Kenya — Kenyans desperate for a planned food distribution to those suffering under coronavirus-related restrictions have briefly rushed through a gate in the capital of Nairobi.

An Associated Press journalist saw the crowd push through a gate at a district office in Kibera slum. Police fired tear gas and left several people injured.

Movement restrictions or lockdowns in many African countries are creating widespread pain for low-income workers, who often have little or no savings.

SKOPJE, North Macedonia — The leaders of the two largest political parties in North Macedonia have been ordered to observe a two-week self-isolation after coming into contact with a television journalist who has tested positive for COVID-19.

The Health Ministry says former prime minister Zoran Zaev, who leads the Social Democrats, and conservative opposition leader Hristijan Mickoski have both received isolation orders and would remain at home.

The restrictions were imposed despite test results that were negative for Mickoski. Results for Zaev were expected later Friday.

Former interior minister Oliver Spasovski is the country's current caretaker prime minister as North

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Macedonia heads to an early general election.

North Macedonia has 663 confirmed infections and a death toll of 30.

MADRID — Spanish authorities say they believe plans to allow the return of non-essential workers to their factories and construction sites next week won't cause a significant surge in coronavirus infections.

"We are not under the impression that these measures will increase in an important way the transmission (of the virus)," the spokeswoman of Spain's health emergency coordination center María José Sierra said Friday. "We wouldn't be adopting them otherwise."

Some experts had warned that the relaxing of the two-week "hibernation" of economic activity comes too early.

Who exactly returns to work will be outlined in Friday's Cabinet meeting although authorities have said that heavy industry and construction will be part of those returning to work. Shops are meant to remain closed and office workers are encouraged to work from home.

There were 605 new deaths recorded overnight, the lowest increase since March 24.

The COVID-19 has claimed at least 15,843 lives among the 152,446 confirmed cases in Spain. However, officials acknowledge the true scale could be much higher.

BRUSSELS — Worship places in Belgium will remain open over the Easter weekend but health authorities are advising residents to watch religious services remotely as the death toll of the novel coronavirus has now surpassed 3,000 cases.

Benoit Ramacker, a spokesman for the COVID-19 crisis center, said on Friday that officials in charge of the worship places must ensure that social distancing measures will be implemented in religious premises.

"All other religious services are prohibited, except unfortunately for funerals, but also weddings," he said. "We also see that several of you, many religious communities, have planned in the coming days an alternative religious service via Internet radio and television. Thank you and congratulations also for this creativity."

According to the latest figures released by the health ministry, 40% of the 3,019 people who have died in Belgium because of the epidemics lived in nursing homes.

MADRID — The coronavirus has claimed at least 15,843 lives in Spain and has officially infected 152,446 people, although both the rate of contagion and mortality are dropping, official health ministry data shows Friday.

The 605 new deaths recorded overnight were the lowest increase since March 24. There were 4,576 more recorded infections than a day earlier, bringing down the daily rate of contagion to 3%.

The Spanish government is meeting Friday to establish a 20 billion-euro (\$21.9 billion) fund to help small businesses and the self-employed cope with the economic fallout of the outbreak, but it's also discussing what comes next for 47 million Spaniards who have been quarantined for four weeks.

After a two-week freeze of all nonessential economic activity, factories and construction sites are set to resume work on Monday. Schools, most shops and offices will remain closed, with people encouraged to work from home.

Experts have warned that the return of certain activity will increase contagion and that health authorities need to scrutinize any new cases.

A three-week survey of 30,000 households should help understand how many people are or have been infected and guide future "de-escalation" of the confinement measures, the government has said.

The state of emergency has been extended to April 26 for now, although Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has said that he will most likely be asking parliament for further extensions.

TOKYO — Cardboard boxes are being readied at Tokyo's Narita international airport for quarantine as arriving people wait for test results for the coronavirus.

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Shotaro Tajima, a Japanese Health Ministry official in the contagious diseases section, said Friday people are now at nearby hotels and have not had to stay in the boxes.

If cases grow, people may need to wait longer for test results, which usually come back within several hours. Japan is requiring tests for people who fly in from dozens of nations, including the U.S., China and Italy.

Japan has about 5,500 coronavirus cases, but worries are growing about a surge in cases. The government's state of emergency declared this week requests people to stay home. It also asks businesses to shut down but allows exceptions, such as small "izakaya" counter-bar restaurants, which can be open from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m. in Tokyo.

PARIS — Although still damaged and scarred by fire, Notre Dame Cathedral is — if only for an instant — coming back to life as a center for prayer in a Paris locked down against the coronavirus.

Just days before the first anniversary of the April 15, 2019, inferno that ravaged the beloved Paris landmark, the French capital's archbishop is leading Good Friday celebrations unlike any others that have gone before inside the centuries-old jewel of Gothic architecture.

Archbishop Michel Aupetit will venerate a crown of thorns that survived the flames that brought down the cathedral's roof and spire and horrified Parisians and believers across the world.

There will be prayers, readings and music during the Friday morning ceremony but no crowd. With the cathedral closed to the public, only a tiny handful of people are taking part. But the proceedings are to be broadcast live.

LONDON — A senior British official is being accused of flouting the government's advice against all but essential travel outside the home.

U.K. media have reported that Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick traveled from London to his house in central England, then made another 40-mile (60-kilometer) journey to visit his parents.

Opposition Labour Party lawmaker Nick Thomas-Symonds said "it's very important for public confidence that Robert Jenrick explains himself and why exactly that journey was necessary."

Jenrick said he went to his parents' house to deliver "essentials -- including medicines" to his parents, who are self-isolating. Delivering medicines to vulnerable people is permitted under the U.K. lockdown rules.

Scotland's Chief Medical Officer Catherine Calderwood was forced to resign earlier this week after traveling to her second home, in violation of her own rules.

Authorities are imploring people not to travel to see relatives or visit second homes over the Easter holiday weekend as Britain sees the number of deaths from COVID-19 continue to rise.

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkey is sending a planeload of surgical masks, N95 masks and hazmat suits to Britain to help the country battle the coronavirus outbreak.

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

A second plane carrying more equipment would depart on Saturday, the agency reported.

There was no information on the quantity of the supplies sent.

In the past weeks, Turkey has similarly donated medical supplies to Italy, Spain as well as five countries in the Balkans.

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

ACCRA, Ghana — Some African nations are trying to ease the pain of coronavirus lockdowns even as they extend them.

In Ghana, President Nana Akufo-Addo says the lockdowns in the greater Accra and Ashanti regions have been extended for a week, but he pledges that the government will fully absorb the cost of electricity bills

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for the "poorest of the poor" and 50% of the cost for all other consumers.

In South Africa, which has announced a two-week lockdown extension, President Cyril Ramaphosa says he and his Cabinet will take a one-third salary cut for the next three months, with the money going to a fund to help vulnerable countrymen.

Full or partial lockdowns in Africa have affected more than 20 countries, severely hurting the livelihoods of millions of informal workers and others.

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — Malaysia will extend its lockdown for another two weeks but let selected industries reopen in stages.

Nonessential businesses and schools have been shuttered for a month until April 14 but Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin announced Friday the restricted movement order will be extended until April 28. Even though the country has reported a reduction in cases in recent days, he said it was premature to lift the control measures as "the war on COVID-19 is not yet over."

Malaysia reported 118 new infections on Friday, bringing its total to 4,346, the highest in Southeast Asia.

Muhyiddin said selected economic sectors can reopen in phases but must follow strict hygiene guidelines and movement restrictions.

He warned the lockdown could stretch up to a few months for the government to be entirely sure that the chain of transmission has been broken.

MOSCOW — Russian doctors will start treating patients with pneumonia for the new coronavirus without waiting for test results to confirm the diagnosis, the country's Health Minister Mikhail Murashko said.

"We're seeing that the disease progresses fast, and it has specific clinical presentation, (allowing) to diagnose (it) without confirming in the lab based on the clinical presentation," Murashko said in a TV interview that aired on Thursday night.

Murashko's statement echoes earlier comments from Moscow doctors involved in treating coronavirus patients, saying that the vast majority of pneumonia cases in Russia are most likely caused by the new virus and should be treated as such.

"Existing tests for confirming COVID-19 are 70-80% accurate," Denis Protsenko, chief doctor of a top Moscow hospital treating coronavirus patients, said Thursday.

Russian health officials reported 1,786 new cases of the coronavirus on Friday, bringing the country's total to 11,917. The outbreak has picked up speed in Russia in recent weeks, with the number of cases growing exponentially and doubling every few days. Kremlin critics have been questioning the official statistics, pointing to a growing number of pneumonia cases and suggesting that Russia's coronavirus case count might be much higher.

BUDAPEST, Hungary — Hungary's prime minister says the country now has about 2,000 of the 8,000 ventilators it expects to need at the peak of the coronavirus pandemic.

Prime Minister Viktor Orban also said Friday on state radio that he expects around 20% of Hungary's health workers to be infected with the coronavirus.

Orban, who has extended indefinitely restrictions put in place two weeks ago to make people stay home, said Hungary was learning from measures implemented in neighboring Austria, which he called "our large laboratory," where the pandemic is at a more advanced stage.

Hungary has 1,190 cases of the coronavirus, and 77 people with have died.

LONDON — Boris Johnson's father says the British prime minister needs time to recover from the new coronavirus and is unlikely to be back at work imminently.

The U.K. leader spent three nights in the intensive care unit at St. Thomas' Hospital in London after his COVID-19 symptoms worsened. He was moved back to a regular ward on Thursday evening, and his office says he is in "the early phase of his recovery."

His father Stanley Johnson said the prime minister needed to "rest up."

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"He has to take time," Stanley Johnson told the BBC. "I cannot believe you can walk away from this and get straight back to Downing Street and pick up the reins without a period of readjustment."

Johnson was diagnosed with COVID-19 two weeks ago, the first world leader confirmed to have the illness. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab is standing in for Johnson while he is in hospital.

MANILA, Philippines — Southeast Asian foreign ministers have endorsed in a video conference the setting up of regional fund to respond to the coronavirus pandemic and discussed a planned meeting of their leaders with counterparts from China, Japan and South Korea.

The Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila said Friday that the top diplomats of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations linked up by video Thursday in a meeting led by Vietnam. The ASEAN ministers could not hold an actual meeting due to the pandemic.

The ministers endorsed several collective steps to fight the pandemic, including the establishment of a COVID-19 ASEAN response fund, sharing of information and strategies and ways to ease impact of the global health crisis on people and the economy, the department said but did not provide details.

They also discussed a planned meeting of their leaders with counterparts from China, Japan and Korea in a video conference on April 14 to talk about the pandemic, three Southeast Asian diplomats told The Associated Press.

In Thursday's discussion, Philippine Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. stressed the importance of maintaining peace and stability in the South China Sea amid the contagion, the department said.

The Philippines has expressed solidarity with Vietnam after a Vietnamese fishing boat was reportedly rammed and sank by a Chinese coast guard ship in the disputed waters.

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

VIRUS DIARY: Isolation and patience on a quiet Gaza farm

By FARES AKRAM Associated Press

BEIT LAHIYEH, Gaza Strip (AP) — I haven't spent more than a single night at my family's farm on the northern edge of Gaza since an Israeli airstrike killed my father there more than a decade ago. But the arrival of the coronavirus has upended our notions of danger and refuge.

During the three wars and countless skirmishes fought between Israel and Hamas since the militant group seized power from rival Palestinian forces in 2007, the borderlands were the front line. Israel would carry out airstrikes, shelling and sometimes full-scale incursions, usually in response to Palestinian rocket fire.

During the wars, Israeli strikes could happen anywhere, at any time. But I felt a little safer in Gaza City. I assumed that media offices were less likely to be targeted.

The virus has different rules of engagement.

It preys on crowded areas where it can leap undetected from one host to another, quietly carried by human breath. Since the first cases were reported late last month, Gaza City feels much more dangerous, with every crowded sidewalk a potential source of contagion.

A broader outbreak in Gaza, where 2 million Palestinians are confined in a narrow, impoverished coastal strip, would be catastrophic. Our health infrastructure has suffered from years of conflict and a blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt. There are only around 60 ventilators, and most are in use for other ailments.

As the virus invaded country after country, many Gazans hoped we would finally enjoy some benefits from the blockade. We have no tourists or cruise ships. Travel is heavily restricted. And Israel and Egypt sealed their borders early on.

But a couple of Palestinians returning from Pakistan tested positive, and now authorities have reported a total of 13 cases. Hamas insists it has isolated all the cases and says the situation is under control. Many Gazans seem to accept that.

On a recent grocery run, I saw streets and markets bustling. Hamas has closed schools, mosques, wed-

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ding halls and cafes, but few people appear to be social distancing. We are accustomed to sheltering at home during wars, but Gazans have never faced an enemy like this.

I stocked up on food and cleaning supplies and returned to the farm, where I am isolating with my mother and sister. It's a pleasant change from the city, where I live in a small apartment and the power is out for more than 10 hours a day.

We awaken to the smell of orange and clementine blossoms from the orchards outside, and songbirds instead of car horns. Nearby, the heavily guarded frontier is quiet. In the pandemic, Israel and Hamas appear to have found a common foe.

Conflict, though, is never far from my mind.

I was born and raised here. I have spent my career reporting on the blockade, the wars and the astonishing resilience of my fellow Gazans.

As tranquil as the farm is now, I cannot forget that it was here where my father, Akram al-Ghoul, was killed. He was a judge with the Western-backed Palestinian Authority and stopped working when Hamas took over. He retired to the farm, where he tended to his flower garden and raised cattle. During the war, he insisted on staying to feed the animals.

On Jan. 3, 2009, an Israeli bomb landed on the farmhouse, killing him and another relative. Human Rights Watch, where I was employed at the time, sent a letter to the Israeli military seeking an explanation. We have yet to receive a response.

Gaza contains many stories like mine. We've been trained by hard experience to expect the worst, and we've mastered the art of patience along the way. Now, facing a very different threat and waiting here on our farm — this farm that was my father's — I hope that patience will see us through.

"Virus Diary," an occasional feature, will showcase the coronavirus saga through the eyes of Associated Press journalists around the world. Fares Akram is the AP correspondent in Gaza. Follow him on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/faresakram>

New, larger wave of locusts threatens millions in Africa

By **RODNEY MUHUMUZA** Associated Press

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — Weeks before the coronavirus spread through much of the world, parts of Africa were already threatened by another kind of plague, the biggest locust outbreak some countries had seen in 70 years.

Now the second wave of the voracious insects, some 20 times the size of the first, is arriving. Billions of the young desert locusts are winging in from breeding grounds in Somalia in search of fresh vegetation springing up with seasonal rains.

Millions of already vulnerable people are at risk. And as they gather to try to combat the locusts, often in vain, they risk spreading the virus — a topic that comes a distant second for many in rural areas.

It is the locusts that "everyone is talking about," said Yoweri Aboket, a farmer in Uganda. "Once they land in your garden they do total destruction. Some people will even tell you that the locusts are more destructive than the coronavirus. There are even some who don't believe that the virus will reach here."

Some farmers in Abokat's village near the Kenyan border bang metal pans, whistle or throw stones to try to drive the locusts away. But mostly they watch in frustration, largely barred by a coronavirus lockdown from gathering outside their homes.

A failed garden of cassava, a local staple, means hunger. Such worries in the village of some 600 people are reflected across a large part of East Africa, including Kenya, Ethiopia and South Sudan. The locust swarms also have been sighted in Djibouti, Eritrea, Tanzania and Congo.

The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization has called the locust outbreak, caused in part by climate change, "an unprecedented threat" to food security and livelihoods. Its officials have called this new wave some 20 times the size of the first.

"The current situation in East Africa remains extremely alarming as ... an increasing number of new

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swarms are forming in Kenya, southern Ethiopia and Somalia," a new FAO assessment said.

Favorable breeding conditions through May mean there likely will be another new round of swarms in late June and July, coinciding with the start of the harvest season, the agency said.

The U.N. has raised its aid appeal from \$76 million to \$153 million, saying immediate action is needed before more rainfall fuels further growth in locust numbers. So far the FAO has collected \$111 million in cash or pledges.

The locusts are "invading the Eastern Africa region in exceptionally large swarms like never seen before," the Nairobi-based Climate Prediction and Application Center said.

The new swarms include "young adults," voracious bugs "that eat more than the adult ones," said Kenneth Mwangi, a satellite information analyst at the center.

Mwangi and other officials in Kenya cited difficulties in fighting the infestation as coronavirus-related travel restrictions slow cross-border travel and delay the delivery of pesticides.

The verification work of field officers has been curtailed, making it harder for the center to update regional prediction models, Mwangi said.

In rural Laikipia county, among the worst affected in Kenya, some are calling attention to the threat to commercial farms.

"I think, unfortunately, because of other things going on around the world, people are forgetting about the problem with the locusts. But it's a very, very real problem," farmer George Dodds told the FAO.

Aerial spraying is the only effective way to control the locust outbreak. After the locusts crossed into Uganda for the first time since the 1960s, soldiers resorted to using hand-held spray pumps because of difficulties in obtaining the needed aircraft.

Uganda's agriculture minister said authorities are unable to import enough pesticides from Japan, citing disruptions to international cargo shipments.

The government is yet to meet an additional budget of over \$4 million requested for locust control, the minister said.

The sum is substantial in a country where the president has been fundraising from wealthy people to help respond to the virus and its economic disruption. Health workers are threatening to strike over lack of protective gear.

Other countries face similar challenges.

In Ethiopia, where some 6 million people live in areas affected by the locust outbreak, the infestation if unchecked "will cause large-scale crop, pasture and forest-cover loss, worsening food and feed insecurity," the FAO says.

Bands of immature locusts are forming in areas that include the country's breadbasket, the Rift Valley



In this photo taken Tuesday, March 31, 2020, desert locusts swarm over a tree in Kipsing, near Oldonyiro, in Isiolo county, Kenya. Weeks before the coronavirus spread through much of the world, parts of Africa were already threatened by another kind of plague, the biggest locust outbreak some countries had seen in 70 years, and now the second wave of the voracious insects, some 20 times the size of the first, is arriving. (Sven Torfinn/FAO via AP) MANDATORY CREDIT

region, it said.

Ethiopia's agriculture minister has said efforts are underway to deploy six helicopters against the infestation that could last until late August.

But ministry spokesman Moges Hailu spoke of an ominous sign: The locust swarms are now appearing in locations where they had not been previously sighted.

Elias Meseret in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia contributed.

Joe Biden's next big decision: Choosing a running mate

By **BILL BARROW** Associated Press

Joe Biden faces the most important decision of his five-decade political career: choosing a vice president.

The presumptive Democratic presidential nominee expects to name a committee to vet potential running mates next week, according to three Democrats with knowledge of the situation who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal plans. Biden, a former vice president himself, has committed to picking a woman and told donors this week that his team has discussed naming a choice well ahead of the Democratic convention in August.

Selecting a running mate is always critical for a presidential candidate. But it's an especially urgent calculation for the 77-year-old Biden, who, if he wins, would be the oldest American president in history. The decision carries added weight amid the coronavirus pandemic, which, beyond its death toll, threatens to devastate the world economy and define a prospective Biden administration.

"We're still going to be in crisis or recovery, and you want a vice president who can manage that," said Karen Finney, a Democratic strategist who worked for Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign. "This seems like a much more important decision than usual."

Biden faces pressure on multiple fronts. He must consider the demands of his racially, ethnically and ideologically diverse party, especially the black women who propelled his nomination. He must balance those concerns with his stated desire for a "simpatico" partner who is "ready to be president on a moment's notice."

The campaign's general counsel, Dana Remus, and former White House counsel Bob Bauer are gathering information about prospects. Democrats close to several presumed contenders say they've not yet been contacted.

Biden has offered plenty of hints. He's said he can easily name 12 to 15 women who meet his criteria, but would likely seriously consider anywhere from six to 11 candidates. He's given no indication of whether he'll look to the Senate, where he spent six terms, to governors or elsewhere.

Some Biden advisers said the campaign has heard from many Democrats who want a woman of color. Black women helped rescue Biden's campaign after an embarrassing start in predominately white Iowa and New Hampshire. Yet there's no firm agreement that Biden must go that route.

"The best thing you can do for all segments of the population is to win," said Biden's campaign co-chairman Cedric Richmond, a Louisiana congressman and former Congressional Black Caucus chairman. "He has shown a commitment to diversity from the beginning. But this has to be based on, like the VP says, who he trusts."

Biden has regularly praised California Sen. Kamala Harris, a former rival who endorsed him in March and campaigned for him. When she introduced him at a fundraiser this week, Biden did little to tamp down speculation about her prospects.

"I'm coming for you, kid," he said.

He's also spoken positively of Stacey Abrams, who narrowly missed becoming the first African American female governor in U.S. history when she lost the 2018 Georgia governor's race.

Yet those two women highlight Biden's tightrope. At 55, Harris is talented and popular with Democratic donors, a valuable commodity for a nominee with a fundraising weakness. But she's also a former prosecutor who faces the same skepticism among progressives as Biden. Meanwhile, her home state is already

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firmly in the Democratic column and could make her an easy target for Republicans eager to blast the party as too liberal.

Abrams, 46, is a star for many younger Democrats, a group Biden struggled to win over in the primary. And she could help turn Georgia into a genuine swing state. But the highest post she's ever held is minority leader in the Georgia House of Representatives, a possible vulnerability in a time of crisis.

Paul Maslin, a Democratic pollster based in the battleground state of Wisconsin, said it will be impossible for Biden to please everyone.

"You can ask too much of a vice president pick to bridge everything — ideology, generational gap, gender, race, experience," he said. "There's going to be something wrong with every one of these choices."

New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham is Democrats' only nonwhite female governor. Former Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada has reportedly vouched for his state's Latina senator, Catherine Cortez Masto. Illinois Sen. Tammy Duckworth is a veteran who lost limbs in combat. She's of Thai heritage and has notably jostled with President Donald Trump. And Rep. Val Demings, a black congresswoman from the swing state of Florida, helped lead the House impeachment efforts against Trump.

Yet all four women are relative unknowns nationally.

Biden could go beyond Washington to Gov. Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan, one of the three Great Lakes states that delivered Trump his Electoral College majority in 2016. She's won plaudits during the pandemic and meshes with Biden's pragmatic sensibilities, winning her post in 2018 with promises to "fix the damn roads."

But it's not clear that a 48-year-old white woman from the Midwest brings Biden advantages he doesn't already have or can't find elsewhere.

It's a similar conundrum for others, including Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar, a former rival who fits seamlessly with Biden's politics. Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, meanwhile, could offer a bridge to progressives, but several Democrats said her age, 70, is a bigger liability than potential policy differences with Biden.

Several African American advocates and progressive leaders said the Democratic ticket's policies and empathetic appeals are what's most important.

Black voters "have to trust the messenger," said Adrienne Shropshire, executive director of Black PAC, and "a black woman could stand up and have moral authority to lead on those big issues facing the country right now."

But she said that doesn't mean a white, Asian or Latina vice presidential nominee couldn't "speak to the systemic issues, the structural issues that allow for inequalities to persist."

Associated Press writer Thomas Beaumont contributed to this report from Des Moines, Iowa.

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

5 things to know today - that aren't about the virus

By The Associated Press

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

1. BIDEN'S NEXT BIG DECISION IS CHOOSING A VICE PRESIDENT

The presumptive Democratic presidential nominee expects to name a committee to vet potential running mates next week, according to three Democrats with knowledge of the situation.

2. TRUMP RAILS AGAINST MAIL VOTING

President Donald Trump is warning without evidence that expanding mail-in voting will increase voter fraud.

3. BARR SAY RUSSIA PROBE STARTED 'WITHOUT BASIS'

Attorney General William Barr believes the Russia investigation that shadowed President Donald Trump for the first two years of his administration was started without any basis.

4. OPEC STANDOFF IMPERILS PROPOSED 10 MILLION-BARREL OIL CUT

Saudi Arabia proposes a reduction in oil production by OPEC and other oil-producing countries, including Russia, that involves a 10 million-barrel-per day cut until July.

5. NEW, LARGER WAVE OF LOCUSTS THREATEN MILLIONS IN AFRICA

A second wave of young desert locusts, some 20 times the size of the first, is arriving in Africa. Billions of the voracious insects are winging in from breeding grounds in Somalia.

Singapore battles virus hotspots in migrant workers' dorms

By EILEEN NG Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — After managing to keep on top of the first wave of coronavirus outbreaks, Singapore is grappling with an alarming rise in infections among migrant workers housed in crowded dormitories.

Such cases now account for about a quarter of Singapore's 1,910 infections. The government reported 287 new cases Thursday, its biggest daily jump. More than 200 were linked to the foreign workers' dormitories.

The tiny city-state of less than 6 million people was seen as a model in its early, swift response to the virus. But it apparently overlooked the hundreds of thousands of migrant workers living in conditions where social distancing is impossible. Now more than 50,000 workers are quarantined and others are being moved to safer locations.

The outbreaks merit attention in a region where practically every country has large numbers of migrants working, commuting and living in crowded conditions.

On one recent night, masked foreign workers laden with luggage got off buses, each keeping a small distance from the others, to be registered and screened before moving into a Singapore army camp.

The 1,300 workers moving into segregated facilities in two army camps will be required to observe strict health measures, stagger their meal times and maintain social distancing. They are due to stay in the camp until May 4.

Posing beside single cots spaced several feet apart, several gave thumbs ups in a short video on the defense ministry's Facebook page.

Others are to be moved into unoccupied housing estates, an exhibition center and other locations to help reduce crowding in their dormitories.

Foreigners account for over a third of Singapore's workforce, and more than 200,000 are migrant workers from Pakistan, Bangladesh and other poorer Asian countries living in 43 registered dormitories across Singapore.

Most work in construction, shipping and maintenance jobs, helping to support Singapore's trade-reliant economy.

Virus clusters have emerged in nine of the privately-run dormitories that house up to 20 men per room, with shared toilets, cooking and other facilities.

By failing to act sooner, Singapore allowed the illness to spread more widely than expected in communities that already are relatively vulnerable, experts said.

"This is a very major and urgent issue that requires active and urgent intervention," Lawrence Wong, the national development minister, said in televised remarks.

This week, the city tightened precautions with a four-week "circuit breaker," shutting down non-essential businesses and schools until May 4.

"Hindsight is 20/20. In general, Singapore could have implemented measures earlier that would have blunted the initial surge in imported cases in the second half of March," said Hsu Li Yang, an associate professor and program leader for Infectious Diseases at the National University of Singapore.

"The important matter at hand is to swiftly disrupt the chains of transmission in the dormitories, as well as in the rest of Singapore," Hsu said.

The more than 50,000 workers quarantined for two weeks in five dormitories that were declared "isolation areas" are being screened and tested. They are still paid wages and provided food and other essentials.

The facilities are sanitized daily and they have been given health kits with face masks and hand sanitizers. Labor advocates have questioned the strategy, saying confinement en masse in dormitories might put the workers at greater risk.

"When social distancing in dorm rooms with 12–20 men per room is effectively impossible, should one worker in a room be infected – and he could be asymptomatic — the repeated contact he has with his roommates because of confinement would heighten the risk to his mates. The infection rate in the dorm could increase dramatically," the group Transient Workers Count Too, a charity group helping migrant workers, said in a statement.

It likened the quarantines to the conditions aboard cruise ships that were incubators for coronavirus infections.

The pace of testing, reportedly at less than 3,000 a day, cannot keep up with infections, and many thousands of workers live outside the 43 registered dormitories, noted the group's vice president Alex Au.

"They may be able to move 5% or 10%, but our guess is that the densities in the dormitories are so high, you may need something something like a 50% reduction. Where do you place tens of thousands of workers? It's a very, very big problem," Au said.

The virus is highlighting the need for better living conditions for workers.

"The problem here is Singapore's whole economic model, our prosperity, is really built on the assumption or expectation of cheap labor," Au said. "This is going to show us that cheap is a temporary thing. There will be hidden costs that will erupt when you don't expect it," he added.

AP Business Writers Zen Soo in Hong Kong and Elaine Kurtenbach in Bangkok contributed.

Israelis looking out for overworked healthcare professionals

By ARON HELLER Associated Press

RAANANA, Israel (AP) — While hunkering down at home and keeping three young children entertained in coronavirus isolation, Adi Karmon Scope had a thought: How much harder was it for those on the front lines of the pandemic?

So Karmon Scope, a 44-year-old startup entrepreneur took to Facebook to ask Israelis to assist both the health care professionals who are saving lives while braving exposure in long hours at hospitals, and the families they have left behind.

The result has been staggering.

In less than three weeks, more than 10,000 have signed up to "Adopt A Doc." Besides providing for needed protective gear and other medical supplies, an army of volunteers has carried out grocery shopping, delivered homecooked meals, babysat for children and even walked the pets of health care providers.

In Israel, more than 10,000 people have contracted the coronavirus and 92 have died. The government has imposed severe restrictions on movement to try to quell the rapid spread, including a near-closure on especially vulnerable neighborhoods.

With the Israeli workforce largely homebound due to stringent regulations, and the economy slowed to a near standstill, Karmon Scope has enjoyed the robust engagement of tech-savvy Israelis with time on their hands. They've built a website that pairs volunteers with nearby doctors, nurses and other overworked medical personnel. Nearly 1,000 now have a designated volunteer who cares for their personal needs, including finding them parking spots in crowded urban centers when they return home from late shifts. Some 3,000 other volunteers offer support in other ways.

The grassroots organization now has a coordinator at every hospital in the country, has secured donations from private catering companies and its lobbying effort with local municipalities has produced various gestures toward the doctors.

"We've seen all the medical teams in Italy and in China and we kind of wanted to make sure that our medical teams are taken care of, all their personal lives are taken care of so they can really focus only on being professional and at their best in the hospitals," said Karmon Scope.

Einat Kedem, a 51-year-old digital project manager from Raanana in central Israel, said the least she could do was contribute her cooking skills. Three times a week, she's been delivering vegan meals to the home of Maayan Bacher, an emergency room doctor who's been too overwhelmed to prepare healthy meals for her two children.

"We're all at home these days with nothing to do and this is a way to feel like we are part of something," she said.

Bacher was initially hesitant to seek assistance, saying that as a doctor she was used to providing aid, not receiving it. But her children have fallen in love with Kedem's pasta dishes and an intimate relationship has since evolved in which the family now feels free to reach out to Kedem and express their profound appreciation.

"It's heartwarming that people care about us," she said upon receiving a delivery. "It's a good feeling to be appreciated cause, after all, we came into this job basically just to help people."

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.

Follow Aron Heller at www.twitter.com/aronhellerap

Rising from sick beds, COVID medics head back to front lines

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — "Be strong, mum, we really love you," is what Dr. Aurelie Gouel's kids tell the ICU physician when she sets off for long hospital shifts trying to save critically ill coronavirus patients.

Although aged just 4 and 6, Gouel's children are acutely aware of how dangerous the disease can be not only because their mother has briefed them but also because she is among the more than 1.6 million people worldwide who have fallen sick.

Tell-tale symptoms — fever, cough, intense fatigue, difficulty breathing — floored Gouel in March.

"It was very tough for three, four days," she told The Associated Press.

But as soon as she felt well enough, she plunged straight back to work at her Paris hospital that treated Europe's first fatal case.

"It was quite frustrating being at home and seeing how badly the hospitals needed help," the 38-year-old said.

"We were trained for this," she added. "The world needs us."

In the brutal months since France reported Europe's first coronavirus cases in January and then, in February, the first death on the continent, the scourge has infected so many thousands of doctors, nurses and other health workers in Europe that some have now recovered and are going from their sick beds back to the front lines.

"It's a bit like what happened in the First World War. People were wounded and came back to the battle-field," said Dr. Philippe Montravers, head of anesthesiology and critical care at Bichat Hospital in Paris.

The hospital treated the 80-year-old Chinese tourist who in mid-February became the first person outside Asia to die from COVID-19.

"They feel ... very guilty staying at home," Montravers said. "As soon as they are feeling better, they come back to help."

As scientists race to unravel the new coronavirus' mysteries, as yet unsure of how resistant people become to re-infection after exposure, health workers hope that those among them who recovered and are returning to hospitals are now armed not only with a deeper, more personal understanding of the virus but also with some degree of immunity.

That armor against possible reinfection could make them especially useful in the drawn-out battle until a vaccine is found.

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"It helps a lot for them to return to work, and especially for them to return with immunization. That's really fantastic because it takes away the fear that we have for a second wave of infections," said Dr. Julio Mayol, medical director of the San Carlos Clinic Hospital in Madrid. Nearly 15% of its 1,400 staffers have been infected.

For most people, coronavirus symptoms clear up in two to three weeks. But for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, and death.

In Italy, those back on duty include Elena Pagliarini, a nurse who was photographed before her diagnosis slumped exhausted next to a computer keyboard, an image that came to symbolize the plight of the worst-hit country, with more than 18,000 dead.

In Paris, the returnees include Sebastien, an intensive-care medic at Bichat, the hospital where Gouel also works. Sebastien doesn't want his surname published because he fears that his already "very scared" neighbors will freak out completely if they learn that he and his wife, a surgeon who is 5 months pregnant, both fell ill.

His infection was so severe that he spent three days "nailed to my bed. I was so exhausted by the symptoms that I couldn't get up."

Yet he was back at the hospital less than two weeks later, even as his wife's symptoms worsened.

"She was really in a bad way and she was hospitalized on the day that I went back to work," he said.

"I felt useless. I had to work. I would have been completely stressed out had I stayed home," he added. "I wanted to help my colleagues."

Assuming that he may have developed some immunity, Sebastien says he now volunteers for ICU tasks that carry a higher risk of infection, such as taking viral swabs and inserting bronchoscopes into patients' diseased lungs so they can be inspected.

"I prefer to expose myself than colleagues who haven't been infected," he said.

Gouel also says the possibility of immunity reassured her when she went back to dealing with the crush of patients.

"I feel that I'm now a durable strength," she said. "If there are things that need to be done with heavily infected patients, things that are risky, I'm easier with me doing them, rather than my colleagues."

Despite being "very worried" when she was sick, Gouel's husband supported her rapid return to work, she said.

"He knows that I will be careful, that I won't take risks, that I will wear masks and gloves and that I won't put myself and our family in danger," she said.

And although her kids "know all about the coronavirus, that it is serious and people die of it," they also understand that her drive to fight it means she can't always be with them.

"They give me a kiss and say, 'Be strong, mum, we really love you,'" she said. "Even though they are small, they know that my rightful place is with the sick."

Associated Press writers Aritz Parra in Madrid and Frances D'Emilio in Rome contributed.

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The howling: Americans let it out from depths of pandemic

By **DAVID ZALUBOWSKI** and **JAMES ANDERSON** Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — It starts with a few people letting loose with some tentative yelps. Then neighbors emerge from their homes and join, forming a roiling chorus of howls and screams that pierces the twilight to end another day's monotonous forced isolation.

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From California to Colorado to Georgia and New York, Americans are taking a moment each night at 8 p.m. to howl in a quickly spreading ritual that has become a wrenching response of a society cut off from one another by the coronavirus pandemic.

They howl to thank the nation's health care workers and first responders for their selfless sacrifices, much like the balcony applause and singing in Italy and Spain. Others do it to reduce their pain, isolation and frustration. Some have other reasons, such as to show support for the homeless.

In Colorado, Gov. Jared Polis has encouraged residents to participate. Children who miss their classmates and backyard dogs join in, their own yowls punctuated by the occasional fireworks, horn blowing and bell ringing.

"There's something very Western about howling that's resonating in Colorado. The call-and-response aspect of it. Most people try it and love to hear the howl in return," said Brice Maiurro, a poet, storyteller and activist who works at National Jewish Health.

The nightly howl is a primal affirmation that provides a moment's bright spot each evening by declaring, collectively: We shall prevail, said Dr. Scott Cypers, director of Stress and Anxiety programs at the Helen and Arthur E. Johnson Depression Center at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. It's a way to take back some of the control that the pandemic-forced social isolation has forced everyone to give up, Cypers said.

"The virus' impact is very different for everyone, and this is a way to say, 'This sucks,' and get it out in a loud way," Cypers said. "Just being able to scream and shout and let out pent-up grief and loss is important. Little kids, on the other hand, are really enjoying this."

Maiurro and his partner, Shelsea Ochoa, a street activist and artist, formed the Facebook group Go Outside and Howl at 8 p.m. The group has nearly half a million members from all 50 U.S. states and 99 countries since they created it as Colorado's shelter-in-place order went into effect last month.

"We wanted to do this mostly because people are feeling isolated right now," said Ochoa, 33, who works at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science. "I think it hit on something others needed."

Why howling?

In California, friends and family of Ochoa's would howl at sunset; in Brazil, where she lived recently, residents would cheer at sunset. Maiurro, who also works at National Jewish Health, and fellow poets would howl at the moon during back-alley poetry readings in Boulder.

"There's no wrong way to do it," said Ochoa. "People can subscribe any kind of meaning they want to it."

The couple suggest different themes for the evening howls, such as a recent "The Day of I Miss You."

Health care workers are grateful for the support — and the nightly moment's relief from the stresses of their work.

Jerrod Milton, a provider and senior vice president of operations at Children's Hospital Colorado, makes it a point to step outside at 8 p.m. each evening.

"It not only inspires me with a sense of solidarity and appreciation, but it makes me laugh a little each day," Milton said. "I cannot tell the difference between the howls coming from fellow humans and those instinctively coming alongside from our canine neighborhood companions."

In downtown Los Angeles, thousands of people yell, scream, cheer, applaud and flash lights from their apartment balconies and windows, thanks in large part to Patti Berman, president of the Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council, who promotes the ritual conceived by council communications director Marcus Lovingood.

"I never believed it would take off like this," said Berman, who in her 70s is staying inside her apartment in deference to the health concerns of her family.

Berman's concerns are for the homeless on LA's Skid Row, the struggling family-owned small businesses, the people she's used to meeting and helping face-to-face in her 15 years on the council.

"These people are my stakeholders and my job — and this is where the howl comes in — is to let them know that we haven't disappeared. To preserve the human contact," she said.

Organizers say restoring and keeping that contact through such extreme adversity will be an achievement to look back upon when the crisis eventually passes.

"When people look back on this and with so many sad stories, hopefully they'll also remember this as one of the good things," Ochoa said.

For McConnell, virus carries echo of his boyhood polio

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Mitch McConnell's earliest childhood memory is the day he left the polio treatment center at Warm Springs, Ga., for the last time.

He was just a toddler in 1944, when his father was deployed to World War II, his mother relocated the family to her sister's home in rural Alabama and he came down with flu-like symptoms. While he eventually recovered, his left leg did not. It was paralyzed.

Two long years later, after shuttling young McConnell to and from the center where then-President Franklin Roosevelt received polio care, his mother was told that day that her young son would be able walk into his life without a leg brace.

She immediately took the 4-year-old shopping for a new pair of shoes.

More than 70 years later, Senate Majority Leader McConnell walked into the U.S. Senate to pass a sweeping coronavirus rescue package — and shutter the chamber for the foreseeable future — as another dangerous flu-like virus fills the nation with anxiety, quarantines and unimaginable disruptions to American life.

"Why does this current pandemic remind me of that? I think No. 1 is the fear," said McConnell in an interview with The Associated Press.

"And the uncertainty you have when there's no pathway forward on either treatment or a vaccine and that was the situation largely in polio before 1954."

The two crises now bookend McConnell's years, making the Kentucky Republican an unexpected voice of personal experience and reflection in what he calls these "eerie" times.

It's an unusual role for the famously guarded leader, who rarely says more when less will do, and relishes an image as a sly political tactician. But as more than 16,000 people in the U.S. have died from coronavirus, the echoes are all too familiar. So too is the solution, as he sees it, to care for the nation's sick and produce treatments, and an eventual vaccine.

"There's hope that we're going to get on top of this disease," he said, "within a year, year and a half."

Polio ignited a dreadful fear across the U.S. in those years, especially in summertime. The virus particularly struck children, forcing swift closures of schools and playgrounds and, in the sweltering heat, swimming pools. Towns shuttered, families isolated. Thousands died, others were hospitalized and some left permanently paralyzed or with post-polio syndrome. The Salk vaccine was still years away.

"It was a scary virus," said Stacey D. Stewart, president & CEO of March of Dimes, which started as FDR's National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis but quickly took on the name that reflected the public service call for Americans to donate their dimes for a polio solution.

"You didn't understand how you got it," she said, and because it impacted so many young people, for "so many parents, what's worse for a parent than having your child get sick?"

As a toddler, McConnell was taught to stay off his feet. His mother understood if he tried to walk too soon after the illness he might require a leg brace for the rest of his life. She began taking him on the hour drive each way to Warm Springs where Roosevelt's condition was a warning sign to Americans the disease spared no one. Back home, she would would run through the physical therapy with her son "like a drill sergeant," he said.

McConnell doesn't remember much from those earliest days. Much of it he knows from his mother's retelling and his own reading of books of the era.

But he does remember what happened in the years after she bought him those saddle oxfords on their last trip home from Warm Springs.

He couldn't run as fast as the other kids. When he put on a swimsuit, his left leg had a narrower circumference, leaving him embarrassed. Even now, he says he has trouble climbing stairs.

"I was lucky," he said, choking up as he recalls his mother, "who was determined to see me walk again."

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Of "tenacity, hard work and not giving up," he said, "My mother instilled all that in me before I was 4 years old and I think it's been a guiding principle in how I lead my life."

One of the first things McConnell did when he was elected to public office in Kentucky, he writes in his memoir, was buy a new pair of shoes.

In the Senate last month, McConnell began linking past to the present "just as soon as it became clear that we were actually endangering each other to be together."

Senators were self-isolating and one, Rand Paul, announced he tested positive.

With the Capitol all but shuttered, the Senate raced to approve the rescue package. The votes tallied, McConnell adjourned the Senate.

"Let's continue to pray for one another," he said. "And for our country."

Now from a quiet Capitol Hill -- he is working from the second floor of his townhouse, his wife Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao on the third — the two suddenly find themselves like other Americans stumbling through the new stay-at-home normal.

"We're soldiering all through," he said.

It's also bringing time for reflection.

A year ago, he returned to Warm Springs for the first time. At what is now a historic site, he reviewed files about his condition, his visits. He learned he sometimes received treatments when Roosevelt did, including the week the former president died.

Asked how his mom afforded his own medical care, he was stumped. Were there bills? "Honestly, I don't know the answer to that," he said. He said he would try to find out.

One memory that does stand clear is the arrival of the polio vaccine, and the relief it brought a weary populace.

As Congress considers the next aid package, he said he wants more money for health care.

"I've had a normal life, but I've been acutely aware of the disease that I had and the relief that the country had when they found the vaccine," he said.

"We're going to get that relief."

Lives Lost: At 97, World War II vet takes a final road

By GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — In his final months, Bill Chambers couldn't walk, but he found peace in motion.

Three times a week, his oldest daughter, Patty Cooper, would meet him at the adult family home where he lived with four other World War II veterans. The caretakers would load him into her Volvo SUV, and she would drive him through the forests, farmlands and suburbs east of Seattle.

He knew the roads well. In about 30 years working for the county, he helped build most of them.

"He'd talk about who lived here, who lived there," she said. "There's a cemetery where his parents and my mom are, and he wanted to make sure I knew, 'This is right where I want to be.' He was getting things in order."

Chambers, 97, died March 14 at the home in Kirkland. He wasn't obviously ill, but tested positive for COVID-19 after he passed.

Chambers grew up in Saskatchewan, where his father sold ice from a horse-drawn buggy to supplement their farm income.

Shortly before World War II, the family moved to Seattle. Chambers enlisted with the Canadian army at 18. He landed at Normandy on June 15, 1944 — nine days after D-Day — and spent the war driving an armored bulldozer, building roads as the front advanced across Europe.

For the rest of his life he would tell war stories. The rough voyage crossing the Atlantic on the Queen Mary ocean liner. How he slept under his tractor to protect himself from enemy fire. The time the shooting stopped when he prayed. How he never brushed his teeth.

He saw paratroopers shot from the sky and buried soldiers he knew. He saw Holocaust survivors treading the roads and gave them whatever food he had. He spent Christmas Eve 1944 with other troops in a

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barn in Holland. Grateful villagers serenaded them with carols.

After the war he put his road-building skills to work for King County, where the suburbs were growing to accommodate Boeing's burgeoning workforce. He loved machines and being outside; grading roads was a great fit.

Through friends, he met his future wife, Barbara Jean. They settled in rural Carnation. Cooper, one of five children, said they would ride their horses into the small downtown. Their vacations were road trips to Yellowstone, to Disneyland. "It was a happy time," she said.

Chambers was slight, short and quick, happy, kind and full of gratitude, but not overly affectionate — Cooper doesn't remember him telling her he loved her until about a year ago. He enjoyed playing sports. His wife wasn't a dancer, but he would venture into Seattle with friends to foxtrot and swing.

"Every day have somewhere to go, something to do and someone to see," he would say. Being active kept him going.

Barbara died in 2014. Chambers stayed in the house. He still drove; his children would visit. Cooper brought him to get his first pedicure at 95. He loved it.

They would go to her daughter Kelly Adsero's house, where Adsero's young daughter — Chambers' great-granddaughter — would make him donuts, apple crisps or other favorite soft foods. After not brushing his teeth during the war, he eventually lost them.

Chambers hated moving into the adult family home after a fall at his own house last summer, hated losing his independence, especially hated when the staff accidentally put his wallet, with a beloved picture of his armored bulldozer, through the wash. But there was no other choice: He was too much for Cooper to manage and in-home care too costly.

But Cooper could still take him for drives, at least until the virus closed the home to visitors in late February. They would split a sundae in the Costco parking lot, watching the customers, or drive to the old house. Along the roads he built, Cooper would blast Christian music so her partially deaf dad could hear.

Chambers wasn't very religious, but Cooper became spiritual during three decades as a 911 operator. She wanted to ensure he was prepared for what was coming.

There were emotional conversations in the car. He sought forgiveness for things he had done. He told her he was so unhappy in the home that he wanted to kill himself. She replied: "Dad, we're not going to talk about that any more, but we will ask God to take you home."

"He was keen on that," she said.

On his last day, the old soldier didn't want food or drink, but lay in bed watching longtime TV preacher Jimmy Swaggart. Whenever the staff looked in, he answered, "It's time."

Cooper, who last spoke with him two days earlier, is OK with not having said a final goodbye.

"He was having a talk with God," she said. "What a beautiful way to exit into eternity."

'Everybody is very scared': Struggle to keep apart on subway

By TOM HAYS and MARSHALL RITZEL Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — They let trains that look too crowded pass by. If they decide to board, they search for emptier cars to ride in. Then they size up fellow passengers before picking the safest spot they can find to sit or stand for commutes sometimes lasting an hour or more.

This quiet calculus is being performed daily by people who must keep working during the coronavirus pandemic and say the social distancing required is nearly impossible to practice in the enclosed spaces of New York City's public transit system.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that people should stay 6 feet (2 meters) apart. But even though ridership has plummeted in the city, making jam-packed trains and buses the exception rather than the rule, passengers aren't always guaranteed even 6 inches (15 centimeters).

"Everybody is very scared," Shaderra Armstead, a health care clinic receptionist who rides the subway to work, said this week. "They're trying to keep their distance from each other, but it's impossible."

"It makes me not want to go on the train at all," she said. "I'm nervous every day, but I still have to go."

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Riders on some trains in Brooklyn and Queens this week sat or stood in some cars within a few feet of one another, some with their faces uncovered, while keeping their distance from homeless people camped out. At the same time, there are images showing subway platforms mostly empty at times they'd typically be crowded.

Transit officials say they're working harder than ever to protect passengers and their own workers amid a pandemic that has killed more than 7,000 New Yorkers in just a few weeks, mostly in the city and its suburbs. Several suburban counties in New Jersey and Connecticut have also registered significant numbers of deaths.

The virus has also taken the lives of 41 employees of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which runs the city's buses and subway as well as many commuter trains. 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.

"We want as little social density and as much social distance as we can get," MTA Chairman Patrick Foye said in a radio interview Tuesday.

Foye, who also got the virus but is doing fine, called scenes of crowding on trains "episodic" and said that safety measures are working well enough that complaints by riders about overcrowding have dried up in recent days.

The challenges aren't unique to New York. In Philadelphia, where at least three transit workers have died from COVID-19, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transit Authority said it will move to a "lifeline" service Thursday, closing some stations and limiting rail and bus service to core routes.

London, Paris and South Korea have also struggled to keep public transport running.

In London, where ridership is down as much as 93% from the same point last year, images posted on social media have shown some trains crowded at rush hour since fewer are running because of staff illnesses. Fourteen London transport staff have died from the virus, including eight bus drivers.

In New York, too, use of all forms of mass transit has plummeted.

Ridership on the subways Monday was down 92% compared to a normal weekday. The commuter rail lines serving Long Island had 97% fewer passengers. On Metro-North, which serves the city's northern suburbs, including those in Connecticut, ridership was down 95%. On MTA buses, it is down more than 60%.

The agency has cut back bus service by about 25%, reduced the number of trains running on weekdays on the Long Island Rail Road from around 740 to around 500 and on Metro-North from 713 to 424.

While subways and buses are all far less crowded than normal, there are still moments that are too close for comfort in the age of coronavirus.

Waiting for a Manhattan-bound train on the Queens platform, Ebrahima Sumareh said he searches for the least crowded subway car he can find before boarding.

"I'm scared for people to touch me, to get close to me," said Sumareh, a railroad quality control clerk. "I'm scared for other people too."

He's also worried some of his fellow riders might not be following the distancing protocols in their lives, not just on the trains, he said. "New Yorkers, we don't listen."

To keep trains from getting too crowded, New York's MTA says it has sought to keep up normal service on the most-used routes. There are also police directing people on subway platforms to less crowded sections of trains. Riders are urged to cover their faces and to report situations where social distancing isn't being observed.

The agency has posted signs on some trains that read: "Essential Worker, yes, ok to ride. ... No — why are you even reading this? Go home."

The MTA has sought to help protect employees by distributing 300,000 medical grade masks, 160,000 surgical masks, and 2.5 million pairs of gloves to its employees since March 1, Foye said.

Queens subway rider Bhargav Munagala said Tuesday that during his commute to his job as a project manager for a food packing and delivery service, he tries "to give respect to the very important people"

like nurses.

"Most of the people I look at now are tired," while others act "crazy," he added. "That's New York."

Associated Press writer Danica Kirka in London contributed to this report.

Schools struggle to safely get free meals to needy students

By **JIM VERTUNO, CEDAR ATTANASIO AND JOHN MONE** Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — When schools started closing across the U.S. during the coronavirus pandemic, they scrambled to keep feeding millions of students from poor families who depend on free and reduced-price meals every day.

Cities big and small quickly ran into problems: food workers, teachers and volunteers manning curbside pickup locations came down with the virus themselves or were too scared to report for duty. Some districts have been forced to suspend their programs altogether.

That's left families already struggling to put food on the table more desperate and schools searching for ways to keep serving those in need safely. Among the biggest school districts to suspend its federally assisted meal program was in Houston, the nation's fourth-largest city, after a worker was exposed to the coronavirus.

"We said, 'Oh, my God, we have to close down because we don't know what's happening,'" said Betti Wiggins, nutrition services officer for the Houston Independent School District.

It stopped giving out meals for more than a week. When the program reopened this week, it had a new way of packaging and handing out food. Instead of providing small meals every day citywide, the district now has fewer, centralized locations where people pick up 30-pound bags stuffed with chicken, potatoes, apples, juice and more. They're designed to last a family of four several days.

Among those getting food this week was Maria Robles, who arrived two hours before pickup opened — at 7 a.m. — and the line of cars behind her already stretched for more than a mile. Some without cars pick up food in anything they can, including baby strollers.

Robles, 49, is unemployed and depends on the meals to help feed her teenage son, who typically eats twice a day at school. Plus, her house is now crowded with four more children after her niece saw her work hours slashed and moved in.

When Houston schools temporarily halted meals, Robles' family went to food banks, where pickings were often slim.

"Food is scarce right now," Robles said, fighting back tears. "It's hard for the adults because we have to see our children go through it. ... It has gotten real scary. There are times I will not eat to make sure they will get something."

During a normal school day, about 22 million students nationwide receive free or reduced-price breakfast and lunch, according to the School Nutrition Association, a nonprofit that works with more than 55,000 school food providers.

The group surveyed about 1,800 members just as schools began to close in mid-March, and their top concerns were children going hungry and protecting the safety of staff and families receiving food.

The problems have affected rural and urban districts alike.

Detroit, which has been hit hard with a surge of coronavirus cases, shut down its meal program for two days last month when a worker tested positive. Like Houston, it reopened with a drastically reduced number of places to pick up food.

In Charleston, West Virginia, the state's largest school district limited food pickup to once a week at school bus stops after staffers began to worry about their exposure to the virus.

Schools in Durham, North Carolina, and nearby Johnson County suspended their meal programs last week after an employee tested positive.

Other regions hit with closures include Memphis, Tennessee, parts of Louisiana, California and south Texas. Houston restarted its program after packing food bags in one place and reducing the number of work-

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ers needed. There are fewer places to pick up meals, but they rotate through the city every day. Workers put bags into cars to reduce interaction, said Wiggins, the schools' nutrition officer.

"Some of these curbside distributions were uncontrollable. Volunteers were coming out of the woodwork," Wiggins said. "You can't handle the food like you were at a picnic. I think we'll be more successful on this outing."

But small school districts may struggle to duplicate Houston's model, said Diane Pratt-Heavner, spokeswoman for the School Nutrition Association. They may not have enough staffers or the facilities to prepare meals with proper social distancing, she said.

Many programs have avoided any shutdowns so far.

Austin High School Principal Cyndi Severns-Ponce said she's confident the program in El Paso, Texas, has enough workers trained to quickly step in if anyone gets sick.

On a recent afternoon, school cafeteria manager Reyna Trejo and food specialist Elva Rangel donned face masks, gloves and long plastic aprons as cars drove up. Trejo held up two fingers to confirm how many meals were needed and told a driver: "Roll your windows up!"

Any meal shutdown would be a problem, which would only get worse if job losses spike.

That's what Viola Jones sees in her Houston neighborhood.

"People have to make a decision: Do I buy food? Do I pay rent?" Jones said as she picked up meals this week.

"People were going hungry even before this. Now with children out of school, more food is needed," Jones said. "Living from paycheck to paycheck before this was already hard. Now it's even harder."

Attanasio reported from El Paso. Mone reported from Houston.

U.S. states share, get creative in hunt for medical supplies

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

With the federal stockpile drained of protective gear, states are turning to each other, private industries and anyone who can donate in a desperate bid to get respirators, gloves and other supplies to doctors, nurses and other front-line workers.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services confirmed Wednesday that the federal cupboard is officially bare at least through this month after it was able to fulfill just a sliver of states' requests.

The development is not a complete surprise. Last month, President Donald Trump told governors to take care of their own needs. States said they were trying but that bidding in a global marketplace for the supplies was highly competitive and expensive, pitting states against each other, their own hospital systems and other countries, including the U.S. government.

New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu, a Republican, said his state has been pursuing multiple avenues to obtain personal protective equipment since the severity of the coronavirus outbreak became apparent.

"Whether it's the commercial market, whether it's overseas, whether it's partnering with other states, we've been scouring literally the planet for a variety of PPE," he said.

States also have begun working together, whether its forming regional alliances to create greater purchasing power or sending excess supplies to hot spots.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom said this week his state, the nation's most populous, plans to spend nearly \$1 billion to buy 500 million masks from May through July with the idea of distributing them throughout the Western U.S. State officials have said they won't be setting up a new supply chain, but rather sharing with states that have a high need. California had spent \$1.4 billion on medical equipment even before announcing its ramped-up purchases.

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer said her state has joined with others in the Great Lakes region to gain buying power. By last week, Michigan, which has more cases than all but two other states, had spent \$130 million on medical supplies to address the crisis.

Montana Gov. Steve Bullock said his state has received five times as many masks from neighboring

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North Dakota as from the national stockpile. Vermont officials said they've worked with other New England states to acquire protective gear.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said Thursday that he will propose that states form a purchasing consortium when he takes over as chairman of the National Governors Association this fall.

"If the federal government's not going to do it, then the states have to do it," he said. "But what happened now can't happen again. And it can't continue to happen."

He estimated that New York has spent at least \$1 billion in its response to the coronavirus outbreak.

Even when the federal government was distributing from its stockpile, most states found that it provided only a fraction of what they needed. In early March, the federal government had said the nation could need as many as 3.5 billion N95 respirator masks over the next year. It delivered 11.7 million to states, just a fraction of the estimated need, according to data released by the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Reform. Deliveries of other gear also fell well below the amounts requested.

Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker, a Democrat, said the state had landed 27 times as many masks and gloves on its own as the federal government provided.

An AP analysis of stockpile distribution data released this week by the House committee underscored what appeared to be, at least at times, an unfocused approach in which the federal government was sending its supplies. Low-population states with relatively few confirmed COVID-19 infections received disproportionate amounts of some equipment, the data show. Alaska and Wyoming, for example, received more than 300 respirators for every confirmed case, while hard-hit New Jersey received just six per case.

To be sure, the federal government is not completely out of the supply business, even with an empty national stockpile. It's buying gear overseas and turning it over to private companies to sell to the states, and is sending states money to help pay for their coronavirus-related costs.

Still, governors are using whatever means they can to supply their medical workers as public health officials warn of case breakouts in more states.

Louisiana State University said its Baton Rouge campus is creating a manufacturing facility to produce 200,000 gowns for doctors in New Orleans, building on an effort that a faculty member started in his garage.

The Iowa Department of Corrections has had inmates produce protective gear, including more than 25,000 masks, 3,000 gowns and 5,000 face shields. In Texas, the National Guard is being enlisted to help at Prestige Ameritech, the nation's largest producer of surgical masks. Arizona is buying 6 million N95 masks from a new production line created by Honeywell.

Arkansas, California, Oregon and Washington have sent ventilators to other states with more pressing needs. New Jersey was among the recipients.

"As soon as we can raise our hand and say, 'We're through this,' we'll be more than happy to return the favor to any other place that is going through (it) as a hot spot," New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy said.

This story has been corrected to show that California plans to spend \$1 billion total, not per month, on masks.

Mulvihill reported from Cherry Hill, New Jersey.

Associated Press reporters Mike Catalini in Trenton, New Jersey; Bob Christie in Phoenix; Melinda Deslatte in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; David Eggert in Lansing, Michigan; Ben Fox in Washington, D.C.; Amy Beth Hanson in Helena, Montana; Anthony Izaguirre in Charleston, West Virginia; David Pitt in Des Moines, Iowa; Holly Ramer in Concord, New Hampshire; Wilson Ring in Montpelier, Vermont; Kathleen Ronayne in Sacramento, California; Julie Carr Smyth in Columbus, Ohio; Marina Villeneuve in Albany, New York; and Paul Weber in Austin, Texas, contributed to this article.

What you need to know today about the virus outbreak

By The Associated Press undefined

A staggering 16.8 million Americans have been thrown onto the unemployment rolls in just three weeks, underscoring the terrifying speed with which the coronavirus outbreak has brought world economies to a near standstill.

Meanwhile, residents in Wuhan, China, the city where the coronavirus pandemic began, are cautiously returning to shopping and strolling in the streets.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been moved out of intensive care, where he was treated for three days with COVID-19, his office said Thursday.

Here are some of AP's top stories Thursday 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:

— Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned the U.N. Security Council on Thursday that the coronavirus pandemic is threatening international peace and security — “potentially leading to an increase in social unrest and violence that would greatly undermine our ability to fight the disease.” Guterres said the crisis has “hindered international, regional and national conflict resolution efforts, exactly when they are needed most.”

— The virus outbreak has put much of American life on hold, but the combatants in the nation's culture wars aren't taking a cease-fire. In a country deeply divided over politics, some liberals are accusing conservatives of using this crisis to advance long-held goals, especially in the areas of access to abortion and the ballot box. Conservatives have complained about restrictions on church services and gun shops.

— The coronavirus pandemic will push the global economy into the deepest recession since the Great Depression, with the world's poorest countries suffering the most, the head of the International Monetary Fund said Thursday.

— U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned Thursday that the coronavirus pandemic “is having devastating social and economic consequences for women and girls” that could reverse limited progress toward gender equality over the last 25 years.

— Oil-producing countries including those of the OPEC cartel and Russia are trying to strike a global deal to pump less crude in a bid to limit a crash in prices that, while welcome for consumers, has been straining government budgets and pushing energy companies toward bankruptcy. Late Thursday OPEC and Russia reportedly had reached a tentative deal to cut production by 10 million barrels per day for two months.

— With the federal stockpile drained of protective gear, states are turning to each other, private industries and anyone who can donate in a desperate bid to get respirators, gloves and other supplies to doctors, nurses and other front-line workers. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services confirmed Wednesday that the federal cupboard is officially bare at least through this month after it was able to fulfill just a sliver of states' requests.

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

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that will show you the situation where you are, and where loved ones or people you're worried about live.

ONE NUMBER:

— 6.6 MILLION: With a startling 6.6 million people seeking jobless benefits last week, the United States has reached a grim landmark: Roughly one in 10 workers have lost jobs in just the past three weeks.

IN OTHER NEWS:

— SIGNS OF HOPE: High schools across the country are turning on stadium lights at night in a sign of hope amid closures due to the coronavirus. The movement has been fueled by social media with the hashtag #BeTheLight — across the country.

— SERIOUS ABOUT SAFETY: Nova Knight is 5 and very serious about keeping others safe during the coronavirus outbreak. The Fairbanks, Alaska, resident has made a video that's been viewed more than 18,000 times and drawn the praise of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

— YESTERDAY'S SKILLS: Millions of people who are trying to stay home are being driven by necessity — or boredom — to relearn some old household skills. That means things like mending clothes, cutting hair, baking bread and fixing a dripping faucet.

— WIPED OUT: Finding toilet paper in a global pandemic is a struggle. That's because it's part of a very tight supply chain.

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

Official: Saints emails on clergy crisis should stay secret

By JIM MUSTIAN Associated Press

Hundreds of emails detailing the New Orleans Saints' efforts to conduct damage control for the area's Roman Catholic archdiocese amid its clergy sexual abuse crisis should remain shielded from the public, a court official recommended Thursday.

The recommendation by a court special master came almost three months after The Associated Press urged the release of the confidential emails as a matter of public interest. Those emails emerged as part of a lawsuit against the church and it will ultimately be up to a judge in that case to make the final decision.

Releasing the messages would only "embarrass or bring under public scrutiny" those who tried to help the Archdiocese of New Orleans as it sought to weather the fallout from the clergy abuse crisis, retired Judge Carolyn Gill-Jefferson wrote in a five-page filing.

She agreed with church leaders and the Saints that the communications were private, writing that "the exchange of information during discovery is to be held within the confines of the pending litigation and outside of public view."

Attorneys for about two dozen men suing the church have alleged the emails show that the NFL team, whose owner is devoutly Catholic, aided the church in its "pattern and practice of concealing its crimes."

One of the attorneys, Richard Trahan, said he will object to Gill-Jefferson's recommendation, which has not yet been adopted by the judge presiding over the lawsuit. It was not immediately clear when the judge would rule on the issue.

The Saints have said they have nothing to hide and that the team does not object to the emails being made public during a later stage of the litigation.

The Saints acknowledged giving church leaders advice on how to handle media attention surrounding the 2018 release of a list naming more than 50 clergy members "credibly accused" of sexual abuse.

The Saints have close ties to the archdiocese, and New Orleans Archbishop Gregory Aymond is a close friend of team owner Gayle Benson, who inherited the Saints and the New Orleans Pelicans basketball team when her husband, Tom Benson, died in 2018.

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US job losses surge as world leaders urge Easter distancing

By MICHELLE R. SMITH, CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and MARINA VILLENEUVE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A staggering 16.8 million Americans lost their jobs in just three weeks, a measure of how fast the coronavirus has brought world economies to their knees. Meanwhile, religious leaders worldwide Thursday urged people to celebrate Good Friday and Easter from the safety of their homes.

In other developments, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was moved out of intensive care at the London hospital where he is being treated for the virus. The 55-year-old had taken a turn for the worse early in the week as his country descended into its biggest crisis since World War II.

Governments warned that the hard-won gains against the scourge must not be jeopardized by relaxing social distancing over the weekend. Across Europe, where Easter is one of the busiest travel times, authorities set up roadblocks and otherwise discouraged family gatherings.

A spike in deaths in Britain and New York and surges of reported new infections in Japan and in India's congested cities made it clear the battle is far from over.

New York state reported a record-breaking number of dead for a third straight day, 799. More than 7,000 people have died in the state, accounting for almost half the U.S. death toll of more than 16,000.

"That is so shocking and painful and breathtaking, I don't even have the words for it," New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said.

But he added that there are hopeful signs, including slowdowns in the number of people being hospitalized, admitted to intensive care and placed on ventilators.

He said the onslaught of patients has not been as big as feared and hospitals are standing up to the strain so far. About 18,000 people were hospitalized, well short of the 90,000 hospital beds statewide, many of which were hurriedly lined up at a convention center and a Navy ship docked in the city.

Worldwide, the number of dead topped 95,000 and confirmed infections reached about 1.6 million, according to Johns Hopkins University, though the true numbers are believed much higher, in part because of different rules for counting the dead and cover-ups by some governments.

Numbers released Thursday by the U.S. government showed that 6.6 million workers applied for unemployment benefits last week, on top of more than 10 million in the two weeks before that. That amounts to about 1 in 10 American workers — the biggest, fastest pileup of job losses since the world's largest economy began keeping records in 1948.

And still more job cuts are expected. The U.S. unemployment rate in April could hit 15% — a number not seen since the end of the Great Depression.

Sharon Bridgeman, 57, of Kansas City, Missouri, was laid off from her job two weeks ago at a nonprofit that helps homeless people and is still waiting to be approved for unemployment benefits.

"I'm worried I may not have a job to go back to," she said. "I'm also worried about the people I work with."

President Donald Trump brushed off fears the economy won't quickly rebound after the crisis, as he has predicted, saying he had a "strong feeling" that "the economy is going to do very well."

"I think that what's going to happen is we're going to have a big bounce, rather than a small bounce," he told reporters. "I think we're going to open up strong."

Trump said he had met with his treasury and transportation secretaries about helping support airlines and that he likely would put out a proposal over the weekend.

The U.S. Federal Reserve announced it will provide up to \$2.3 trillion in loans targeted toward both households and businesses.

In many European countries, where social safety nets tend to be stronger than in the U.S., government programs that subsidize workers' pay are keeping millions of people on payrolls, though typically with fewer hours and at lower wages.

Governments from the 19 countries that use the euro agreed Thursday on a package of measures that could provide more than a half-trillion euros (\$550 billion) for companies, workers and health systems to

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cushion the economic impact of the outbreak.

The head of the International Monetary Fund warned that the global economy is headed for the worst recession since the Depression. The United Nations' labor organization said the equivalent of 195 million full-time jobs could be lost in the second quarter, while the aid organization Oxfam International estimated half a billion people worldwide could be pushed into poverty.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top U.S. infectious-diseases expert, shot down hopes that warmer spring weather would bring an end to the crisis.

"One should not assume that we are going to be rescued by a change in the weather," he said. "You must assume that the virus will continue to do its thing."

Amid widespread restrictions on public gatherings, major religious denominations are holding virtual services where members can watch on TV or online. Others are arranging prayer at drive-in theaters, where people can stay in their cars.

The virus "doesn't take a day off for Good Friday or Easter Sunday," said Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Other churches plan to move ahead with services, especially in states like Texas, where the governor declared religious gatherings "essential services." A Houston church has installed hand-washing stations and rearranged its 1,000-person sanctuary to hold about 100 people spaced 6 feet (2 meters) or more apart.

Pope Francis will celebrate Easter Mass in a nearly empty St. Peter's Basilica instead of the huge square outside. In England, the Archbishop of Canterbury will deliver his Easter sermon by video.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei suggested mass gatherings may be barred through the holy Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, which runs from late April through most of May.

Meantime, there were encouraging signs in France, where the national health agency saw indications the crisis is stabilizing, though more than 12,000 lives have been lost.

New infections, hospitalizations and deaths have been leveling off in hard-hit Italy and Spain, which together have around 33,000 deaths, but the daily tolls are still shocking. Spain reported 683 more dead, bringing its total to more than 15,200. Britain recorded 881 new deaths, for close to 8,000 in all.

Japan recorded more than 500 new cases for the first time, a worrisome rise since it has the world's oldest population and COVID-19 can be especially serious in the elderly.

For most, the virus causes mild to moderate symptoms like fever and cough. But for some, especially older adults and the infirm, it can cause pneumonia. About 350,000 people have recovered, by Johns Hopkins' count.

Smith reported from Providence, Rhode Island. Rugaber reported from Washington. Villeneuve reported from Albany, New York. Associated Press journalists around the world contributed.

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

No halt to culture wars during coronavirus outbreak

By **MARK SHERMAN** and **JESSICA GRESKO** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A partisan fight over voting in Wisconsin was the first issue linked to the coronavirus to make it to the Supreme Court. Efforts to limit abortion during the pandemic could eventually land in the justices' hands. Disputes over guns and religious freedom also are popping up around the country.

The virus outbreak has put much of American life on hold, but the combatants in the nation's culture wars aren't taking a cease-fire.

And in a country deeply divided over politics, some liberals are accusing conservatives of using this crisis to advance long-held goals, especially in the areas of access to abortion and the ballot box. Conservatives have complained about restrictions on church services and gun shops.

"We see the right as being very opportunistic to advance their agenda," said Marge Baker, executive

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vice president of the liberal People for the American Way.

Tim Schmidt, founder and president of the gun-rights U.S. Concealed Carry Association, called restrictions on gun sales "a knee-jerk response to something we don't quite understand. I hope and pray it doesn't happen but that's what I fear," he said in a recent online forum.

The clash over Tuesday's election in Wisconsin is just one fight sparked by the coronavirus. Ultimately, conservative majorities on both the high court and Wisconsin Supreme Court broke with more liberal colleagues to reject Democratic efforts to delay the vote and extend absentee balloting. The rulings signal an approaching season of bitter election-related litigation, said University of California at Irvine law professor Richard Hasen.

"It is a very bad sign for November that the Court could not come together and find some form of compromise here in the midst of a global pandemic unlike anything we have seen in our lifetimes," Hasen wrote about the U.S. Supreme Court justices on his Election Law blog.

"And it does not look like the courts are going to be able to do any better than the politicians in finding common ground on election principles," he added.

Already, presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden has said the country should be looking "to all-mail ballots across the board" because of the pandemic. But President Donald Trump has weighed in strongly against voting by mail, even though he himself casts absentee ballots and Republicans have often favored mail-in ballots especially for older people.

More fights over elections may be ahead, but the pandemic has already led to clashes in multiple states over abortion access. In Republican-led Alabama, Iowa, Ohio, Oklahoma and Texas, governors sought to prohibit almost all abortions by classifying them as elective procedures that should be put off during the virus outbreak.

Those efforts have, so far, been mostly blocked. In Iowa, the American Civil Liberties Union and the state reached an agreement that allows women to obtain "essential" surgical abortions. Federal court rulings have allowed abortions to continue in Alabama, Ohio and Oklahoma.

But not so in Texas, where the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans held 2-1 Tuesday that the state's restrictions on abortions could remain in place during the pandemic. U.S. Circuit Judge Kyle Duncan, a Trump appointee, wrote for the court that the epidemic justified "emergency measures that curtail constitutional rights so long as the measures have at least some 'real or substantial relation' to the public health crisis."

The ruling drew a blistering dissent from Judge James Dennis, a Bill Clinton appointee, who said that results in cases involving abortion at the conservative 5th Circuit don't stem from "the law or facts, but because of the subject matter."

Abortion rights groups on Wednesday went back to a lower court in an effort to resume abortions, and the case could still eventually reach the Supreme Court. Nancy Northup, president of the Center for Reproductive Rights, said Texas "has been trying to end abortion for decades and they are exploiting this pandemic to achieve that goal."

Abortion clinics aren't the only places that states have sought to close during the pandemic. Gun stores, too, have been targeted. Most states have deemed gun sellers essential businesses allowed to remain open during the emergency. But three states — Massachusetts, New Mexico and Washington — forced those businesses to close.

Gun rights groups have gone to court to pressure New Jersey's Democratic governor, Phil Murphy, and local officials in North Carolina to reverse course on gun restrictions. Other lawsuits are pending in California.

Joe Bartozzi, president and CEO of the National Sports Shooting Foundation, said closing the stores is the wrong answer. "You don't want to, in a time of crisis, be suspending civil liberties," Bartozzi said.

Gun-control advocates said the National Rifle Association and allied groups were using the pandemic to advance their cause. "This is part of their playbook for many years which is to foment fear during a time of crisis," said Shannon Watts, founder of the gun-control group Moms Demand Action.

Some churches also have become embroiled in fights about whether they can stay open. Some states' stay-at-home orders have specifically exempted some level of religious activity, but that hasn't necessarily

prevented clashes.

In Kansas, leaders of the Republican-controlled legislature overturned Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly's executive order limiting the size of religious gatherings during the virus outbreak.

"It appears to be out of line and extreme and clearly in violation, a blatant violation, of our fundamental rights," said state Senate President Susan Wagle of Wichita, an abortion opponent. Wagle questioned why abortion clinics remained open, while churches faced restrictions.

Three Houston-area pastors sued over potential fines for holding religious services amid the virus outbreak.

"We believe the government's power stops at the church doors," said Jared Woodfill, a lawyer who represents the pastors and said he's working on three other pandemic-related church lawsuits in Texas, even though Texas Gov. Greg Abbott's executive order deems religious services essential.

He said it's ironic that Wisconsin held elections. "You had elections but you can't have church?" he asked.

Chase Strangio, an American Civil Liberties Union lawyer, took to Twitter to offer a different take on the same set of facts.

"COVID-19: just dangerous enough to block abortion but not dangerous enough to hold elections by mail," Strangio wrote.

Biden joins growing call for release of racial data on virus

By KAT STAFFORD Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Presumptive Democratic nominee Joe Biden is joining a growing call for the release of comprehensive racial data on the coronavirus pandemic, which he says has put a spotlight on inequity and the impact of "structural racism."

Biden's Medium post on Thursday said he is joining Democratic congressional members Ayanna Pressley, Kamala Harris, Cory Booker, Elizabeth Warren and others who have also called for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other agencies to release more data. Biden said he wants data released on income, too, to better help allocate resources to communities in need.

Biden acknowledged this is an "anxious, difficult time" for all Americans, but he noted the disparate impact on black Americans and Latinos, saying the virus can "hit anyone, anywhere," but it doesn't affect every "community equally."

The former vice president also noted a climbing number of infections and deaths among "Navajo Nation and fears about the disproportionate impact the virus could have on Indian Country."

"Unsurprisingly, it's also amplifying the structural racism that is built into so much of our daily lives, our institutions, our laws, and our communities," Biden wrote. "It's unconscionable, and it shouldn't be the case in the United States of America in the 21st Century."

The coronavirus pandemic has transformed the presidential race, forcing candidates to find innovative ways to reach voters and confront the rippling effects of the virus across the country.

After disappointing finishes in the first three voting states, Biden's campaign was reinvigorated with a victory in South Carolina, thanks largely to black voters, who also helped propel him through Super Tuesday and beyond. But the very voter base that helped cement Biden's front-runner status is now being hit particularly hard by the virus, which has ravaged black cities like Detroit, Chicago, New Orleans and Milwaukee.

An Associated Press analysis, which was based on data through April 8, found that black Americans are disproportionately being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Biden addressed the challenges in a virtual town hall Wednesday.

The AP analysis found that of the 3,300 COVID-19 victims whose demographic data was publicly shared by officials, about 42% were black. Black people account for roughly 21% of the total population in the areas covered by the analysis. At the time, there had been 13,000 deaths in the nation. The analysis was one of the first attempts to examine the racial disparities of COVID-19 cases and deaths nationwide.

It involved examining more than 4,450 deaths and 52,000 COVID-19 cases from across the country, relying on the handful of state and local governments that had released victims' race. Since then, other

states have also released data, but a majority of the data is still missing.

On Wednesday, the CDC released racial data for hospitalizations in 14 states in March that showed that one-third of patients were black. In the United States, black people make up about 13% of the total population.

Biden's Medium post comes one day after Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders suspended his presidential bid, making Biden the presumptive nominee to challenge President Donald Trump in November.

Meanwhile, Trump has also acknowledged the virus' impact on African Americans, saying Tuesday that his administration was trying to address what he termed a "tremendous challenge."

Associated Press writer Aaron Morrison and Data Editor Meghan Hoyer contributed to this report.

Kat Stafford is a member of The Associated Press' Race and Ethnicity team. Follow her on Twitter at https://twitter.com/kat__stafford.

A city under siege: 24 hours in the fight to save New York

By ADAM GELLER AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Brooklyn is dark except for the streetlamps when Carla Brown's alarm goes off at 5:15 a.m. -- much too early for an average Monday. But with the coronavirus laying siege to New York, today looms as anything but ordinary.

Brown runs a meals-on-wheels program for elderly shut-ins and in her embattled city, that label suddenly fits nearly every senior citizen. For two weeks, she's been working 12- to 14-hour days, taking over routes for sick or missing drivers. Today, she has to find room on the trucks for more than 100 new deliveries.

She pulls on jeans, grabs her mask and heads for the Grand Army Plaza subway station, wearing a sweatshirt with Muhammad Ali's name printed across the front.

"He's one of my idols," Brown says. "And I just felt like I was ready for the fight today."

What other choice is there?

Before the pandemic swept in, America's biggest, loudest city often lived up to its own hype. Then the coronavirus all but shut it down, claiming lives from the Bronx to the Battery and beyond. Now the hush, whether at midnight or midday, is broken mostly by the wail of ambulances. Streets long ago rumored to be paved with gold are littered with disposable medical gloves.

Over 24 hours, a taxi driver will cruise those desolate streets, searching for the few workers who need to keep moving. A bodega owner will make a promise to a customer he hopes he'll never have to keep. An emergency room doctor and a paramedic will labor to hold down a death toll that on this day threatens to surpass the number killed at the World Trade Center on 9/11.

For them and 8.5 million others, today will be nothing like just another Monday. Because long before the sun has risen, the clock has already begun counting down the latest, most punishing round in the fight for New York.

By 2 a.m., Jesus Pujols' shift -- the one he started more than 17 hours ago -- has been reduced to a numbing blur of bodies.

Pujols grabs naps at the wheel of his minivan between endless trips to recover corpses from homes and hospital morgues. "We've been, like, living inside our cars lately, all the undertakers," says Pujols, who coordinates with several funeral homes, most in Brooklyn.

Sometime around 2 a.m. -- sleep deprivation makes it hard to keep track -- Pujols gets into an argument with a man who has stopped his car in the middle of the street to gawk as the undertaker wheels a body out of a house. To the 23-year-old Pujols, the disrespect is too much to bear.

"Right now, money is not worth it. It's not worth it. I would give up my job any day for, like, a normal, normie job. I'd much rather be quarantined."

At 4:30, Pujols heads to bed. He will wake up in a few hours to fulfill a promise; a friend's relative died

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outside of the city, and the body must be retrieved.

Meanwhile, New York is starting to stir.

When Dr. Joseph Habboushe awakens in his Greenwich Village apartment at 6:15, he notices that the jolt of adrenaline he's felt each morning for the past month is fading. Up until now, every day started as a reckoning that what seemed like a nightmare was, in fact, real. Now, he no longer has any doubts.

Shaving close to ensure his medical safety mask will fit tight, the emergency room doctor thinks about how the outbreak has begun to feel like a war, with health care workers on the front lines.

"It's this scary feeling of going in and knowing there's some chance that I will get sick because of this, and we don't know what's going on, and we don't know our enemy, really."

Today the battle is waged on many fronts. At Van Cortland Park in the Bronx, a crew from the Army Corps of Engineers scrambles across sprawling soccer fields to erect a 200-bed temporary hospital. Nurses rally outside Harlem Hospital -- pledging to keep a safe distance from passersby -- to decry rationing of ventilators.

And Carla Brown, the warrior for gray-haired New Yorkers, climbs aboard the No. 4 train.

When the subway pulls into Wall Street in Manhattan, dozens of riders pile on to her car. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority has been telling New Yorkers to stay home, and it has reduced service. But in a city that has always considered itself essential, these are the relative few deemed so indispensable that they're supposed to go on working.

They sit or stand shoulder-to-shoulder. No social distancing.

"It was totally crazy," she says. "We were looking at each other like, is this real?"

Just before 7 a.m., Alex Batista arrives to open Deli-licious, the bodega he and his brother, Eudis, own and run in the middle-class neighborhood of Glendale, Queens.

Normally at this hour, people would be bustling into the laundromat next door, the gas station across the street, and many of those people would end up at his place for coffee, milk and breakfast sandwiches.

"It's been a ghost town," Batista says. The most regular patrons are the funeral home workers now.

The first week the city was shutdown, Batista says his business fell 60%. Now, deliveries have propped it back up some. But three or four more months like this and they'll have to close the shop, unsettling one 85-year-old customer who counts it as pretty much the only place still open for food.

"You know what?" Eudis Batista told the man. "Even if we close down, if I have to go to my house and cook food for you, I'll do it for you. No problem."

New York has endured punishing trials -- terrorism on Sept. 11, 2001, flooding and power failures after Superstorm Sandy. But there's been nothing like this.

Sharon Kleinbaum remembers the darkness of the AIDS crisis in 1992, when she became the first rabbi of Beit Simchat Torah, the nation's largest gay and lesbian synagogue. But even that experience could not prepare her for the job of trying to comfort congregants from a distance.

Back then, she recalls, at least she could be there to hold the hands of the dying, to spend time with their loved ones.

"That I cannot be with people now is very hard. I cannot even describe how hard it is," she says.

Kleinbaum calls a congregant on her way to a cemetery for her mother's funeral.

"I let her know that she's not alone," Kleinbaum says. "We have to each show up in the ways we can and be there in places where there's pain."

Online with congregants from her upper Manhattan apartment, waiting to start a lesson about the psalms, conversation turns to haircuts, now that barber shops have been ordered closed. Kleinbaum counsels that with Passover approaching, tradition calls on observant Jews not to cut their hair for 33 days.

"So don't worry about how your hair looks," she jokes. "It's perfect timing."

At 7:45, Habboushe walks into his Manhattan emergency room toting a new, heavy-duty face shield. Ordinarily, he wears full protective equipment only to see certain patients in isolation rooms. Now, he dons

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it as soon as he arrives and keeps it on, changing gloves between patients.

"It must be so, so scary to come into an ER, sick with what you know might be COVID, and have all these health care workers approach you with crazy masks and gowns and big shields," he says.

Habboushe's team today includes a dermatologist who has volunteered to pitch in and two physician's assistants who have joined the staff from other states. But there's little time for introductions. This morning there are 10 to 15 patients, fewer than on some recent days, but some very ill. One woman is already on a ventilator; all must be stabilized until they are moved to a room. And more patients are on the way.

In the South Bronx, Travis Kessel checks in for his 12-hour shift at Emergency Medical Station 18. After a morning briefing from managers, who tell crews they appreciate the stress they're under, the 28-year-old paramedic loads equipment on to his ambulance and logs into the emergency system.

Fifteen seconds later, he gets his first dispatch call.

No one answers the door at the address. "I thought we were getting hit with a cardiac arrest right off the bat," he says. It turns out the woman inside is fine, but didn't have her hearing aids on -- a rare moment of levity.

It won't last. The next call -- and the next, and the next -- end with a patient dying at home or pronounced dead at the hospital.

Kessel has done ambulance work since he was 16, but he's never weathered anything like this. A typical shift used to average five or six emergency calls. The pandemic has doubled or tripled that number.

"There's no breathing in between," he says. "There's no rest."

By now, Sara Haines normally would be out of her apartment in Brooklyn's Williamsburg neighborhood and on her way to host a morning television show; her husband, lawyer Max Shifrin, usually handles the homefront. But the show was shelved for news coverage of the pandemic.

On this morning, Haines is awakened by her daughter at 4:30 a.m. She feeds all three children before prepping to go live from home as a fill-in host on "The View."

She's already tried setting up a home studio near the baby's crib, but the blank wall behind her didn't look right on camera. Today, she sets up in the living room for her 11 a.m. live feed, while the children play just off screen.

"There are people that are really scared and watching from home. People are dying," she says. What happens when she addresses that audience from her sofa? "You don't want it to be interrupted by a toddler."

Outside, the city's legendary traffic has all but disappeared.

Nicolae Hent steers his minivan taxi over the 59th Street Bridge from Queens. It takes more than an hour before he lands his first fare, but he knows where to find it -- Mount Sinai Hospital.

"That's where the customers are now," says Hent, who is 63 and has been driving a cab since 1988. Even before the pandemic, ride apps like Uber had punished his trade. But he could still count on making \$300 a day. Now, there are no office workers flagging him down at evening rush, no crowds heading home from ballgames. He'll be lucky to make \$100, mostly carrying nurses and doctors.

"I feel like I have an obligation to take those hospital workers from a point A to a point B," he says.

Uptown, Carla Brown and her meals-on-wheels crew have places to go. Until a couple of weeks ago, the Charles A. Walburg Multiservice Organization was delivering about 700 meals each day to seniors in Harlem and Washington Heights. Today, they need to dispense 912.

Calls have flooded in from seniors, who are at higher risk from the virus and are hunkering down. Others used to count on care from their adult children, now forced to keep a safe distance. Brown can relate. When she visits her own 77-year-old parents, she does it from the doorstep.

Brown recalls resuming deliveries two days after 9/11. She waited in gas lines after Sandy. But this is different.

"That was finite. We just had to wait," she says. "This is just getting stranger and stranger every day. ... You don't know where the end is. So how do you plan for that?"

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Stuck inside his Bronx apartment, Broadway actor E. Clayton Cornelious ponders the same question. When the pandemic shut down the Broadway musical "Ain't Too Proud -- The Life and Times of the Temptations" and sent him and other cast members home, it felt like a staycation. But now, he's feeling stir-crazy, worrying about family members, fellow actors, and the audiences that sustain Theater Row.

"When are people going to want to come back? When are people going to want to sit next to each other in a small house like that?"

He searches for ways to keep himself occupied, posting on social media and texting family, before stepping on to the balcony for a view of the Hudson River. It soothes him and helps him look ahead.

"We have been isolated so much that now gathering, when we do get a chance to gather, will be special. I know for me it's going to be that way," Cornelious says.

"I'm really going to think about smiling every time I see everybody's face on stage. I think we're all going to come out of this kinder and more appreciative of life."

Back at the hospital, the public address system sounds an alert: All hands needed. Habboushe rushes to a gurney that holds a man struggling for air.

The patient's blood oxygen is down to 50%, life threatening. A ventilator is available. But doctors have noticed that some patients do better on oxygen without sedation or intubation. When that doesn't work, they turn the man on his stomach, another strategy that seems to help breathing.

Minutes later, the patient's blood oxygen is up to 95%. A moment of encouragement.

Habboushe embraces it. By day's end, he'll see about 25 patients. And when he leaves the ER, all are alive.

After three weeks of battling the disease, New York is getting to know its enemy. The saves in the ER today have left Habboushe hopeful that their newly invented battle strategies are working. But there's still so much doctors don't understand.

"I sometimes just want to escape and feel totally overwhelmed — by all the death and terribleness that we have yet to face," he says.

With another shift ahead, there's barely time to take stock.

By day's end, New York's paramedics have responded to 5,639 calls for emergency medical assistance -- dwarfing the 3,500 calls that came in on 9/11.

In the 24 hours ending at 5 p.m., the city has recorded 266 more deaths, bringing the toll to more than 2,700. Hours later, it surpasses the number killed at the World Trade Center. But even that number is likely an undercount, officials acknowledge. Statewide, this marks the epidemic's deadliest day yet.

New York, though, goes on fighting the only way it knows how -- not on some spreadsheet, but in the streets.

Before the pandemic, the paramedic Kessel used to finish days by comparing shifts with his wife, an ER nurse, relishing the patients they'd helped save. They might watch a ballgame or grab a meal in one of New York's 27,000 restaurants to calm their nerves. Now their city is just a shell.

"I personally had moments where I've broken down, not on calls, but it's the moments in between. It's the quiet drive home. It's hearing a song on the radio," Kessel says. As he speaks, sirens echo through the neighborhood. Tears run down his face.

"There's no end in sight, no relief in sight," he says. "Right now the only thing we see is: How much worse is it going to be tomorrow?"

Most of the seats are empty on the afternoon bus from Staten Island into Manhattan. But Joe DeLuca, bound for his evening shift as a concierge at the 72-story CitySpire tower, steps aboard cautiously.

"I've got this mask on. I have my hand sanitizer, got my gloves on. I don't touch anything. I use my phone and keep my head down," he says.

When he reaches the building, a prestige address behind Carnegie Hall, foot traffic on the usually busy sidewalk is just a trickle. Instead, there's an influx of packages, ordered by residents now that most neigh-

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borhood stores are closed, and many are wary of venturing out. DeLuca and his co-workers carry the boxes outside, spraying them down with disinfectant. Once they're dry, he sends them upstairs to their owners in the building's empty elevators.

"I have one family at home and this is my second family," he says. "It is what it is, and it will get better eventually."

With half an hour to sunset, DeLuca looks up as New York's newest evening ritual begins. It's just scattered sounds in this office and entertainment district.

But as the minutes roll by, a din washes across the city -- cheers and shouts from open windows, pots and pans banging from fire escapes, instruments and air horns filling the vacuum. In a city with thousands to mourn, the cacophony is a thank you to doctors, nurses, paramedics and others putting their own lives at risk. It's also an excuse to let go.

The cheers lift Habboushe, the ER doctor, as he walks home along 10th Street with his girlfriend, lines etched in his face from the mask he's worn all day.

Then the wave rolls on, to the Bronx and Queens, Staten Island and Brooklyn, where Sara Haines and her children rush out to the apartment's balcony. Where are the doctors, they ask.

"No, no, you can't see them, just clap. We're saying good job because there are people who are sick," Haines tells them.

"And then on the rooftops, all along, all you hear is like it's the Fourth of July."

This story was reported from midnight to midnight on Monday, April 6, by Associated Press writers David Crary, Adam Geller, Deepti Hajela, Brian Mahoney, Jennifer Peltz, David Porter, Jake Seiner and Michael Sisak and video journalists Robert Bumsted, David Martin, Marshall Ritzel and Ted Shaffrey.

Mad magazine illustrator Mort Drucker dies at 91

NEW YORK (AP) — Mort Drucker, the Mad Magazine cartoonist who for decades lovingly spoofed politicians, celebrities and popular culture, died Thursday at 91.

Drucker's daughter, Laurie Bachner, told The Associated Press that he fell ill last week, having difficulty walking and developing breathing problems. She did not give a specific cause of death and said that he was not tested for the coronavirus. He died at his home in Woodbury, New York, with his wife of more than 70 years, Barbara, by his side.

"I think my father had the best life anyone could hope for," Bachner said. "He was married to the only woman he ever loved and got to make a living out of what he loved to do."

Mad magazine was a cultural institution for millions of baby boomers, and Drucker was an institution at Mad. A New York City native, he joined Mad in its early days, the mid-1950s, and remained well into the 21st century. Few major events or public figures during that time escaped Drucker's satire, whether "Star Trek" and "The Godfather" or Steve Martin and Jerry Seinfeld. In large strokes, Drucker took in every crease, crevice and bold feature. The big jaws of Kirk Douglas and Jay Leno bulged even larger, while the ears of Barack Obama looked like wings about to take flight. Being drawn by Drucker became a kind of show business rite of passage, with Michael J. Fox once telling Johnny Carson that he knew he had made it when he appeared in a Drucker cartoon.

Drucker's admirers also included "Peanuts" creator Charles M. Schulz and "Star Wars" filmmaker George Lucas, who in the 1970s wrote a fan letter to Mad even as his lawyers were threatening to sue over a magazine caricature. (The suit was never filed.)

Besides Mad, Drucker drew for Time magazine, DC Comics, for an ad campaign for fruit and vegetables and for the heavy metal band Anthrax, which commissioned him to design art for its "State of Euphoria" album.

Some of Drucker's illustrations, include a Time cover drawing of Richard Nixon and Mao Zedong playing table tennis, ended up in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. In 2017, Drucker was inducted into the Society of Illustrators Hall of Fame.

"As Mad Magazine became an established (albeit absurd) voice in the nation's cultural mainstream, many of the visual masters who showcased the magazine's written content eventually became icons in and of themselves," the Hall's citation reads. "Indeed, Mort Drucker proved to be one of the most popular artists of the group that collectively came to be known as the 'Usual Gang of Idiots.'"

US gig workers and self-employed face delays in jobless aid

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — After Rich Cruse saw about \$3,000 in income for his photography business quickly disappear to the coronavirus, he tried to apply for unemployment benefits in California. But like many states, his isn't yet accepting claims from the self-employed like him.

That's left Cruse, 58, earning just meager pay driving for Uber Eats near San Diego. And he worries about the health risks.

"I wear a mask and am practically eating hand sanitizer," he said. "It's not what I am supposed to be doing."

Even as nearly 17 million Americans have sought unemployment benefits in the past three weeks — a record high, by far — millions of people appear to be falling through the cracks. They can't get through jammed phone systems or finish their applications on overloaded websites. Or they're confused about whether or how to apply.

And now there is a whole new category of people — gig workers, independent contractors and self-employed people like Cruse. The federal government's \$2.2 trillion economic relief package for the first time extended unemployment aid to cover those workers when they lose their jobs. Yet most states have yet to update their systems to process these applications.

The struggles at U.S. unemployment systems run by the states contrasts with the smoother and more robust protections that many European governments provide for millions who have been thrown out of work as a result of the viral outbreak. In France, for example, 5.8 million people — about a quarter of the private-sector workforce — are now on a "partial unemployment" plan: With the government's help, they receive part of their wages while temporarily laid off or while working shorter hours.

Larisa Ignatovich, who works as a household helper for families around Paris, is among them. French confinement measures mean she can leave only to buy groceries or for medical emergencies. When the confinement rules were imposed in March, her husband's construction work dried up, and she could no longer work. Ignatovich feared they would lack money for food and rent.

But then the government announced special programs to help prevent virus-related layoffs. Under the plan, Ignatovich's employers continue to pay her, and the government reimburses the employer 80% of the sum.

Many European governments seek to subsidize wages in downturns so that workers can remain attached to their employers. By contrast, the U.S. approach typically is to provide support to those who've lost jobs. But unemployment aid doesn't cover everyone. It can be limited to six months or less.

Some economists argue that the European approach explains why unemployment rates there don't spike as high in downturns as in the United States, and fewer workers drop out of the workforce compared with the United States.

The new U.S. economic relief package does include \$350 billion in loans for small companies that agree to retain or rehire their employees. These loans are forgiven if they're used for wages. But that program is off to a rocky start. And Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has already asked Congress for more money given the tidal wave of applications for the loans.

For workers with traditional jobs, state unemployment agencies can use their employers' tax records to confirm that they're employed and determine their earnings history to set their benefit levels. Those workers are eligible in part because their companies pay into state unemployment funds.

By contrast, self-employed and gig workers typically haven't contributed to unemployment funds. And neither have the online platforms that they work through. Now that they're eligible for jobless benefits,

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those workers will have to provide paperwork to document their incomes. Compounding the challenges, the federal government is providing an additional \$600 per week of jobless aid beyond what states provide. This federal money must be routed through the states — another new responsibility.

All of this takes time, which means money can't get to the jobless recipients very quickly.

"I suspect it may take much longer than governments and workers want before the unemployment benefits arrive," said Dmitri Koustas, an assistant professor of public policy at the University of Chicago.

Under the economic relief package, the federal government will pay the benefits for the self-employed and other newly eligible groups. But states must evaluate whether an applicant is actually eligible. Koustas says many states fear they'll be stuck with the bill if they mistakenly approve someone.

For that reason, some states are requiring the self-employed and gig workers to apply for regular state unemployment benefits first. Only if their claims are rejected can they apply for the new federal coverage.

Massachusetts has warned that its unemployment office won't be able to accept claims from gig workers, contractors or the self-employed until April 30. The office has turned to a vendor to establish a new platform for those applications.

In North Carolina, the state unemployment office, which has received a whopping 497,000 jobless claims since mid-March, said it won't likely be able to accept applications from independent contractors and the self-employed for two more weeks.

Pringle Teetor, 62, of Chapel Hill, had to close the glass-blowing studio she co-owns after her revenue evaporated once local art galleries shuttered and spring festivals were canceled. She's filed for unemployment benefits. But Teetor isn't sure whether her application cleared because she kept getting dropped off the computer system. Though she has some savings, she may seek other work if she can't reopen her studio soon. Her husband's dental practice remains closed.

"If this goes on much longer, it's going to change everything," Teetor said.

In California, Cruse tried to apply unemployment benefits after two of the road races that he photographs for charitable groups were canceled. But after filling out forms online, he was told he wasn't eligible. The state has yet to update its website for self-employed workers.

Cruse used to regularly take sunset photos from the beach, which he would post on social media to promote his photography business. But with the beaches closed, he can't even do that.

"The prospects aren't that great for me for the next two to three months at least," he said. "All the existing work that I have is gone."

AP Writers Angela Charlton in Paris and Gary Robertson in Raleigh, North Carolina, contributed to this report.

'Saturday Night Live' to air show, observe social distancing

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "Saturday Night Live" will be back on the air this weekend with a show that abides by social distancing rules.

The comedy sketch show will include a "Weekend Update" news segment and original content from "SNL" cast members, NBC said Thursday.

The material will be produced remotely, the network said, in compliance with efforts to limit the spread of the coronavirus. Part of the pandemic's fallout was a shutdown of movie and TV production that included "Saturday Night Live." Its last original episode aired March 7.

"SNL" is known for its guest hosts and musical artists, but NBC didn't immediately address whether anyone outside the show's cast would be part of this Saturday's episode, which will air at 11:30 p.m. EDT.

"Saturday Night Live" suffered a blow this week with the death of veteran producer and music supervisor Hal Willner. He had not been diagnosed with COVID-19, but his symptoms were consistent with those caused by the coronavirus.

IMF head sees worst economic downturn since Great Depression

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The coronavirus pandemic will push the global economy into the deepest recession since the Great Depression, with the world's poorest countries suffering the most, the head of the International Monetary Fund said Thursday.

"We anticipate the worst economic fallout since the Great Depression," IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said Thursday in remarks previewing next week's virtual meetings of the 189-nation IMF and its sister lending organization, the World Bank.

She said that the IMF will release an updated world economic forecast on Tuesday that will show just how quickly the coronavirus outbreak has turned what had been expected to be a solid year of growth into a deep downturn.

Just three months ago, the IMF was forecasting that 160 nations would enjoy positive income growth on a per capita basis. Now the expectation is that over 170 nations will have negative per capita income growth this year.

Emerging markets and low-income nations across Africa, Latin America and much of Asia are at high risk, she said.

"With weak health systems to begin with, many face the dreadful challenge of fighting the virus in densely populated cities and poverty-stricken slums, where social distancing is hardly an option," Georgieva said.

Investors have grown fearful of leaving their money in emerging economies that could be hit hard by a global recession. As a result, capital outflows from emerging-market countries have totaled more than \$100 billion over the last two months, more than three times larger than the same period at the start of the global financial crisis, Georgieva noted.

In addition, countries that depend on exporting commodities have taken a double blow because of the steep fall in commodity prices.

Georgieva said there was no question that 2020 will be an "exceptionally difficult" year. She said if the pandemic fades in the second half of the year, allowing the gradual lifting of containment measures and the reopening of the global economy, the IMF is forecasting a partial recovery in 2021.

"I stress there is tremendous uncertainty around the outlook," she said. "It could get worse depending on many variable factors, including the duration of the pandemic."

She said that she and World Bank President David Malpass will pursue at next week's virtual meetings an agreement to adopt a standstill on debt payments over the next year by the world's poorest nations, freeing up money they can use for critical health needs.

She also said that the IMF is prepared to commit its \$1 trillion in lending capacity to providing support to nations that need help dealing with the pandemic.

"We are responding to an unprecedented number of calls for emergency financing from over 90 countries so far," she said.

The IMF's executive board has agreed to double the loan levels it will provide from its emergency facilities that she said should allow the IMF to provide around \$100 billion in financing to low-income countries.

Coronavirus forces new approaches to fighting wildfires

By REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — They are two disasters that require opposite responses: To save lives and reduce the spread of COVID-19, people are being told to remain isolated. But in a wildfire, thousands of firefighters must work in close quarters for weeks at a time.

Wildfires have already broken out in Texas and Florida, and agencies are scrambling to finish plans for a new approach. They are considering waivers for some training requirements to previously-certified crew members, and moving some training online.

Other proposals include limiting fire engines to a driver and one passenger, requiring other crew members to ride in additional vehicles. They may scrap the normal campsite catering tents in favor of military-issue

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MREs, or "Meals Ready to Eat" to reduce touching serving utensils.

Federal resources for firefighting efforts may be more scarce, leaving states to deal with more fires.

In light of the "unprecedented challenge" of the pandemic, Forest Service resources will be used "only when there is a reasonable expectation of success in protecting life and critical property and infrastructure," says Forest Service Chief Victoria Christiansen.

Wildland fire camps have always had a reputation for spreading illness. Norovirus outbreaks have occurred and outbreaks of illnesses collectively dubbed the "camp crud" are yearly occurrences for many.

The job is so demanding that it's typically done by younger, healthy and physically fit people. But the nature of the job also works against them: firefighters regularly experiencing high stress, inhaling smoke and dust and dealing with poor sleeping and personal hygiene.

A suck-it-up and tough-it-out culture doesn't help either, said Jessica Gardetto, spokeswoman for the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho. The center coordinates logistics for 14,000 federal firefighters and thousands more state, local and private crews."

"We have really been trying to educate and change that culture because not just in this situation but in others, it's not OK to just tough it out if something's wrong," she said.

You don't have to look too far back in history to see how the one-two punch of a pandemic and wildfire can decimate communities. The 1918 influenza pandemic killed an estimated 50 to 100 million people worldwide. In October 1918, sparks from a passing train ignited fields near Cloquet and Moose Lake, Minnesota.

Four hundred and fifty people were killed in an area that spanned 1,500 square miles (about 3,885 square kilometers). There were 21,000 injuries and 52,000 displaced people, said Curt Brown, a journalist and the author of "Minnesota, 1918." The aftermath made it easy to spread disease.

"It was the perfect situation to spread the flu -- if you were lucky enough to survive the wildfire, you were crammed into evacuee housing," he said. At least 100 people died of the flu in evacuee housing, an estimate Brown called conservative.

There also are concerns about preparations not being done. Typically, agencies spend months and millions of dollars preparing for wildfire season — clearing brush and doing prescribed burns to reduce the plants that feed massive wildfires.

That's not happening in many places because some fire managers are trying to allow employees to abide by social distancing guidelines as long as possible and to curb smoke from the prescribed burns during the pandemic. Smoke can make breathing more difficult for people with asthma and other lung conditions.

"The biggest issue I see right now is that the prescribed burns aren't getting done," says Casey Judd, the president of the Federal Wildland Fire Services Association, which advocates on behalf of federal firefighters in 42 states. "That's going to increase the fire load."

He said leaders should have started working on a coronavirus plan for firefighters months ago. "I'm not suggesting they're dragging their feet, but obviously they're trying to figure it out just like everyone is," he said.

Kerry Greene, an emergency management specialist and spokeswoman with the U.S. Forest Service, said that although the plans haven't been released yet, they're coming together. The agency is already working to follow directives from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as infectious disease guidelines created in 2008 after a bird flu epidemic.

Like many, fire managers are to some extent flying blind. "Some of the things we're probably going to have to learn as we go," Greene said.

For most people, the virus 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.

Wildland firefighters are first responders just like hospital staff and police, and should be protected accordingly, said , said Boise State University assistant professor Luke Montrose, an expert in community and environmental health. "Like potentially having them wear masks when traveling from place to place."

Under the \$2 trillion federal CARES Act, federal fire crews will have paid sick leave for the first time, she said, which officials hope will encourage crew members to take sick leave when they need it. It's not clear

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if all state or contract firefighters will have the same benefit.

Scott McLean, a spokesman for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, said the agency is following strict physical distancing protocols, and that could mean making larger campsites near wildfires and pulling in additional trailers for showers and other hygiene needs. But there is no agency-wide guidance beyond the recommendations every American has been given for the pandemic, he said.

"It has to be handled on a case-by-case basis because every incident is different. We rely on each individual to be responsible, and we have safety officers on the teams," McLean said. "We will meet those needs as they come."

UK's Johnson out of intensive care as his condition improves

By JILL LAWLESS and PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was moved out of intensive care Thursday at the London hospital where he is being treated for the new coronavirus, as his government told Britons to prepare for several more weeks in lockdown.

Johnson had been in the ICU at St. Thomas' Hospital since Monday after his symptoms of COVID-19 worsened.

Johnson's office said he was "moved this evening from intensive care back to the ward, where he will receive close monitoring during the early phase of his recovery."

It said Johnson was in "extremely good spirits."

The British leader tested positive for the new coronavirus two weeks ago and at first had only "mild" symptoms. He was hospitalized Sunday and taken to the ICU a day later. Johnson had been receiving oxygen without being placed on a ventilator.

His condition appeared to be improving over the past day or so. Earlier Thursday, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, who has been standing in for the prime minister during key meetings, said Johnson was "making positive steps forward."

News of Johnson's improving condition was welcomed across the British political spectrum — and by U.S. President Donald Trump, who tweeted: "Great News: Prime Minister Boris Johnson has just been moved out of Intensive Care. Get well Boris!!!"

As Johnson recovered, the government told Britons it was too early to ease restrictions on public activity imposed March 23 to try to slow the spread of the virus.

The original restrictions were for three weeks, a period that ends Monday. But after chairing a meeting of the government's crisis committee, COBRA, Raab said no decision on lifting the government's stay-home order and business closures would be made "until evidence clearly shows that we've moved beyond the peak" of the outbreak.

Raab said "we're starting to see the impact of the sacrifices we've all made, but the deaths are still rising and we haven't yet reached the peak of the virus."

He said the government and its scientific experts would assess the evidence again next week.

"We mustn't give the coronavirus a second chance to kill more people and to hurt our country," Raab said at the government's daily news conference.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild to moderate symptoms such as fever and cough. But for some, especially older adults and the infirm, it can cause pneumonia and in some cases death.

Almost 8,000 people with the coronavirus have died in British hospitals, according to government figures. While the number of new confirmed cases has begun to plateau, deaths have neared the peaks seen in Italy and Spain, the two countries with the greatest number of fatalities.

On Thursday, the U.K. reported 881 new deaths, down from the 938 recorded the day before. Italy recorded a high of 969 deaths on March 27 and Spain 950 deaths on April 2.

The figures may not be directly comparable, however. Not all the U.K. deaths reported each day occurred in the preceding 24 hours, and the total only includes deaths in hospitals.

U.K. officials have suggested restrictions could be tightened if people flock to parks and outdoor spaces over what is forecast to be a warm, sunny Easter weekend. Currently most parks remain open, and people

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are allowed to go outside for essential work, shopping and exercise.

While most Britons have observed the rules, there have been breaches. Police in the northwest English city of Manchester said they had broken up 660 parties in the city over the past two weeks, including some with DJs and fireworks.

In some cases, police have been accused of excessive zeal. Nick Adderley, the chief of Northamptonshire Police in central England, said Thursday that his officers might have to set up road blocks and start "checking the items in (shopping) baskets and trolleys to see whether it's a legitimate, necessary item."

Civil liberties group Big Brother Watch called those comments "outrageous" and Adderley later clarified that his officers would not be inspecting people's shopping.

Johnson's government was slower than those in some European countries to impose restrictions on daily life in response to the pandemic, leading his critics to accuse him of complacency. Britain also had one of the lowest numbers of hospital beds per capita in Western Europe before the pandemic, with only about 5,000 intensive-care beds nationwide.

That number has been increased vastly in the past few weeks, both by converting other areas of hospitals to treat COVID-19 patients and by building temporary facilities, including a 4,000-bed hospital at London's Excel conference center.

So far, hospitals have been stretched but not overwhelmed, but some medics say they are struggling and still have not received adequate supplies of personal protective equipment, or PPE.

"We're still, by and large, wearing the same equipment that we were a few weeks ago," said Dr. Nishant Joshi, an accident and emergency doctor who works in a hospital north of London.

"We're getting a higher volume of patients, and they are more unwell and they're probably more contagious," he said.

"So it's fair to assume that the PPE that we were kind of making do with, it was a hit and hope situation, a few weeks ago. It's fair to say that it's no longer adequate."

James Slack, the prime minister's spokesman, said "we are confident that enough supply is now reaching the front line" and that the government was working urgently to sort out any distribution problems with protective equipment.

Associated Press Writer Danica Kirka contributed to this story.

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

Pandemic has set the number of air travelers back decades

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

The number of Americans getting on airplanes has sunk to a level not seen in more than 60 years as people shelter in their homes to avoid catching or spreading the new coronavirus.

The Transportation Security Administration screened 94,931 people on Wednesday, a drop of 96% from a year ago and the second straight day under 100,000.

The official tally of people who passed through TSA checkpoints exaggerates the number of travelers – if that is possible – because it includes some airline crew members and people still working at shops inside airport security perimeters.

Historical daily numbers only go back so far, but the nation last averaged fewer than 100,000 passengers a day in 1954, according to figures from trade group Airlines for America. It was the dawn of the jet age. The de Havilland Comet, the first commercial jetliner, was just a few years old, and Boeing was running test flights with the jet that would become the iconic 707.

As air travel became safer and more affordable, the passenger numbers grew nearly every year until 2001. There was no commercial air travel in the U.S. for several days after the terror attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, and people were slow to get back on planes — U.S. passenger traffic didn't grow again until 2003.

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It could be longer this time. Polling firm Public Opinion Strategies said that fewer than half the Americans it surveyed about 10 days ago say they will get on a plane within six months of the spread of the virus flattening. A Stifel Nicolaus analyst estimated that air travel demand won't return to pre-outbreak levels until the middle of next year under the best outcome, and it's likely to be later.

TSA, which was created after the 9/11 attacks, has been chronicling the plunge in air traffic, posting numbers on how many people its officers screen each day. On March 1, it was nearly 2.3 million — almost the same as a year earlier. The one-way roller coaster ride — a sheer downward scream — began in the second week of March and slowed only in the last several days, when there wasn't much more room to drop.

"The falloff is amazing to see," said Henry Harteveltdt, a travel industry analyst. "The good news is that it shows people are taking shelter-in-place orders seriously."

Some of the people still traveling are health care professionals on their way to pandemic hot spots such as New York, where they will help in the treatment of COVID-19 patients. A few are traveling to be with family.

The nation's largest flight attendant union, which is worried about the safety of its members who are still flying, is demanding that the government ban all leisure travel. Representatives at several airlines said they don't know how many leisure travelers are left, since they don't routinely ask people why they are flying.

Airlines have drastically cut the number of flights to match demand and save cash, but even with far fewer flights, most seats are empty.

United Airlines says it is losing \$100 million a day. Delta Air Lines says it is burning through \$60 million a day. All the leading U.S. carriers have applied for federal grants to cover payroll costs through September and some are likely to seek federal loans or loan guarantees.

Even if they get taxpayer help, the airlines warn, they will be smaller on the other side of the pandemic.

The recovery in air travel — whenever it occurs — could depend on many factors including social-distancing rules and the state of the economy, which is staggering as 16.8 million people — one in every 10 workers — have filed new claims for unemployment benefits in the last three weeks.

Air travel is much more affordable and accessible to the masses than it was in the 1960s. Still, both leisure and business travelers have above-average incomes.

"Theoretically, these consumers should be better-positioned financially to be able to travel again," Harteveltdt said, "but we are seeing people at all income levels and all ages affected by job loss or reduction in hours or working for companies that have closed."

5-year-old Alaska girl is serious about keeping people safe

By MARK THIESSEN Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) —

Nova Knight is 5, and very serious about keeping others safe during the coronavirus outbreak.

She said so in a video, the Fairbanks, Alaska, resident made that's been viewed more than 18,000 times and drawn the praise of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

"I'm sorry if you can't go to your play dates," Nova said in the March 26 video. "Don't go anywhere. And wash your hands. I'm serious."

Nova lives with her parents, Robby and Rebecca Knight and her 2-year-old brother, Colton. She has more advice about washing hands in the 40-second clip, including encouraging repeated viewings of the video as a reminder of what to do stay safe from the virus.

"I'm really, really serious, so you should do this video every single day."

Nova told her mom that she wanted to make the video after her aunt, Jennifer Trevors in Halifax, Nova Scotia, sent her a video of Trudeau thanking children in Canada for not going on their play dates and for doing their part in stopping the spread of the virus.

Nova said she intended to watch that video every day, so she knew what to do.

"And then she actually asked me, 'Will you put me on Facebook Live? I have something I want to say,'"

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her mother said. "I was like, well, you're not wearing pants so I'm not going to put you on Facebook Live but I will tape a video."

Nova wasn't satisfied with the first take.

"Could we do one more?" Knight recalled her daughter asking. "I just don't think they know how serious I am."

Rebecca Knight sent the video to her mother, Cindy Trevors of Miramichi, New Brunswick, Canada. The next day, her mother told her she included the video as a comment on Justin Trudeau's March 27 tweet urging people to stay home.

Trevors wrote, "My 5 year old granddaughter made this video after being inspired by your talk about the virus to children."

Trudeau responded: "What a great reminder! Thanks for sharing this video, Cindy -- please let your granddaughter know I'm glad she's helping to spread the word. I hope everyone listens to her advice and remembers to wash their hands and stay home. Because she's right -- that's how we'll all stay safe."

When Nova found out Trudeau responded, she was flabbergasted.

"This is the best day of my life," she told her mother.

Other politicians retweeted the video, Knight said.

The response prompted Nova to do two more videos. In one, she shows people how to properly wash their hands, including using water that's "not too hot and not too cold." Her third video teaches people how not to spread germs and encourages social distancing.

Knight said her daughter has "always known that she wants to do something in helping people."

She may only be 5, but she says she knows what she wants to be when she grows up: either an emergency room physician or a doctor on a search-and-rescue team.

"I want to be there when somebody needs me," she told her mother.

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.

Georgia postpones primaries again because of coronavirus

By BEN NADLER Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Georgia on Thursday postponed primary elections for the second time this year because of the coronavirus, pushing back primaries scheduled for May to June.

The move came a day after New Jersey and Virginia joined at least 15 other states in delaying their primaries amid the coronavirus pandemic so election officials can make preparations to address public health concerns and deal with a poll worker shortage brought on by the outbreak.

On Tuesday, Wisconsin went ahead with its elections, forcing thousands of voters to brave hourslong lines and overcrowded polling places amid the pandemic.

"This decision allows our office and county election officials to continue to put in place contingency plans to ensure that voting can be safe and secure when in-person voting begins and prioritizes the health and safety of voters, county election officials, and poll workers," Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger said in a statement.

The first-term Republican secretary had already opted to postpone Georgia's presidential primaries, initially scheduled for March 24, to May 19 to coincide with the state's other 2020 primary elections. Georgians were scheduled then to choose party nominees for a U.S. Senate seat, U.S. House members and members of the state House and Senate. Elections for judges and district attorneys were also set for May 19.

Raffensperger's decision moves election day for those races to June 9. Runoffs, required by state law if no candidate receives a majority of votes, are set for Aug. 11.

Such delays in the presidential primary calendar could prevent former Vice President Joe Biden from formally clinching the Democratic nomination until later in the summer. But with Vermont Sen. Bernie

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Sanders withdrawing from the race Wednesday, Biden is now the presumptive nominee. The Democratic National Convention has been postponed from mid-July to Aug. 17.

After moving the March election, Raffensperger's office announced a program to mail absentee ballot applications to 6.9 million active registered voters in the state. Those applications can still be used by voters to request an absentee ballot for the June 9 election. A federal lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union on Wednesday argues that asking voters to provide their own stamps is an unconstitutional barrier to the right to vote and asks a judge to order that prepaid postage be provided.

"Delaying Georgia's election does not ensure either public safety or Georgians' right to vote without the Secretary of State taking further action to make vote by mail truly accessible for all Georgians," Saira Draper, the voter protection director for the Democratic Party of Georgia, said in a statement.

Raffensperger had previously argued that he did not have the legal authority to move the presidential primaries any further. But he said he now has that power after Gov. Brian Kemp extended Georgia's state of emergency another month through May 13, a period that overlaps with early voting for a May 19 election.

State House Speaker David Ralston, along with Georgia's two U.S. senators and their nine fellow Republican U.S. House members, had pushed for the election to be postponed.

One main concern among election officials has been the health — and availability — of poll workers. Some counties in Georgia have reported losing poll workers, who are often older, at a rapid pace as the virus has spread because many are fearful for their health.

By Thursday, the state's Department of Public Health counted more than 2,100 people hospitalized by the virus in Georgia and at least 379 deaths.

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

Some churches confront virus restrictions on Easter services

By **CURT ANDERSON** Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — At the holiest time of year for Christians, churches are wrestling with how to hold services amid the coronavirus outbreak, and in some cases, that has set up showdowns with local governments over restrictions that forbid large gatherings.

Many churches are offering parishioners livestreaming options so they can observe Good Friday and Easter on TVs, smart phones and computers. Others are sending worshippers to drive-in movie theaters for services.

Governors in several states have deemed church an "essential service," allowing Easter worship to proceed even as public health officials warn that large gatherings could be a major setback amid a pandemic that has killed more than 14,000 people in the U.S.

The restrictions have created conflicts with state and local authorities. Kansas lawmakers on Wednesday threw out an order by the governor that limited church gatherings to 10 people. A Georgia church where more than 30 people congregated inside a small building on Palm Sunday, prompting a visit from state troopers, plans to move forward with normal Easter worship.

The Rev. John Greiner said the Glorious Way Church in Houston initially moved services online after the county limited large gatherings, but his congregation will hold in-person services on Easter.

"We can't do what God called us to do on livestream," Greiner said.

The church has installed hand-washing stations and rearranged the 1,000-person sanctuary to hold about 100 people with six or more feet between them, Greiner said. They plan to hold two abbreviated Easter services to accommodate everyone who wants to attend.

Churches such as The Center Arena in Orlando held in-person services on Palm Sunday and plan to do the same for Easter, Pastor Envor Moodley said. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, a Republican and close ally of President Donald Trump, exempted religious services from a stay-at-home order issued this month, although he said they must observe social distancing guidelines.

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The fallout from the pandemic has upended other rituals. Easter egg hunts have been canceled in favor of virtual events where children go on the internet to find eggs. Families are reconsidering whether to invite grandparents and other relatives to dinner.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel emphasized that "even short trips inside Germany, to the seaside or the mountains or relatives, can't happen over Easter this year." New Zealand police warned people not to drive to vacation homes and risk arrest, and Lithuania moved to lock down major cities in the heavily Catholic nation.

Pope Francis will celebrate Easter Mass in a nearly empty St. Peter's Basilica, instead of the huge square outside, and in Britain, Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby will deliver his traditional Easter sermon by video.

In the U.S., major denominations are adhering to the restrictions and keeping parishioners at home to stop the spread of the virus.

In the Miami Archdiocese, no in-person services are being held. But church leaders have recorded Mass in English and Spanish for broadcast on local TV at 11 a.m. on Sunday instead, said spokeswoman Mary Ross Agosto.

"We taped the Easter Sunday Mass in all its glory," she said. "The Catholic Church is not closed. People are looking for something uplifting."

The Rev. Michael Waters said members of his 500-person Methodist congregation are among those who've gotten sick, and many have jobs that don't allow the "luxury of social distancing."

He said religious gatherings around the world have been breeding grounds for the virus and condemned holding in-person services as reckless.

"At the core of our faith, of the Christian faith, is the commandment to love God with all our heart, soul and mind, and our neighbor as ourself," Waters said. "Anything that puts the lives of our neighbors at jeopardy should not be promoted or endorsed through the church."

But some smaller churches plan to defy the orders, and law enforcement will be watching in some locations.

In New Mexico, the Archdiocese of Santa Fe said it was closing the grounds of El Santuario de Chimayó, one of the most popular pilgrimage sites in the nation's most Hispanic state.

Police will be at a various locations to tell pilgrims to turn around, officials said.

In Kansas, Senate President Susan Wagle, a Wichita Republican, said her phone had been "ringing off the wall" since the Democratic governor restricted the size of religious gatherings.

"It appears to be out of line and extreme and clearly in violation, a blatant violation, of our fundamental rights," she said. Religious leaders and faithful have made similar arguments elsewhere.

After receiving a complaint Sunday, troopers showed up at Church of God the Bibleway in Statesboro, Georgia, and found more than 30 people inside the small building. The congregation wasn't following social distancing practices, and many people were seen hugging and shaking hands with the pastor, an incident report said. Troopers gave the pastor a warning and urged him to hold services in the parking lot.

They returned in the evening to find the pastor holding another indoor service with people again standing close together. That's when the pastor, Eli Porter, was cited on a misdemeanor charge of reckless conduct, as were four other men.

Clayton Cowart, president of the Statesboro church's parent corporation, told The Associated Press the church plans to move forward with a normal, indoor service for Easter.

"We're going to do as much as we can to respect the law. But when it comes down to telling us how our religious services should go, we're not going to do that," he said.

RiverTown Church in Columbus, Georgia, which has about 200 members, plans to hold drive-in services for the third straight weekend on Easter.

Pastor David Rathel estimates they drew about 55 cars last week. The church marked off every other parking place and asked parishioners to stay in their cars.

"Our message even this Easter Sunday is the resurrection has not been canceled."

The motto on the church's website reads: "Come as you are, worship in your car."

Associated Press writers Jake Bleiberg in Dallas, Russell Contrares in Rio Rancho, New Mexico, and Kate Brumback in Atlanta contributed.

Germany flies in seasonal farm workers amid virus measures

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Two planes carrying Eastern European farmhands arrived Thursday in Germany as an ambitious government program to import thousands of seasonal agricultural workers got underway amid strict precautions to protect both the laborers and the country from the new coronavirus.

The flights to Berlin and Duesseldorf were arranged to address a massive labor shortage created when Germany banned most foreign travelers from entering the country last month in response to the virus outbreak.

Seasonal workers caught up in the ban were not available to pick asparagus, which has already sprouted in Germany, and to plant other crops in the fields where some 300,000 such workers were employed last year.

Most came from Eastern European countries such as Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, and Hungary, where wages are much lower than in Germany, which is Europe's largest economy.

Mariana Hopulele, 43, waited at the airport in the central Romanian city of Cluj with her 17-year-old son, Valentin, for the flight to Duesseldorf. While farm work in Germany is physically demanding, "there is no way to find work that pays enough to support one's family" in Romania, she said.

"I have worked for 15 years abroad, the last eight in Germany on asparagus farms," Hopulele said. "Our contract says we work eight hours a day, but we actually work 10 to 12 hours, seven days a week. It's very, very tough but we do get compensation for the extra hours."

Under the new program, workers are flown to Germany in controlled groups — to prevent possible infection en route — and are subject to medical checks upon arrival. They will be required to live and work apart from the farmhands already in Germany for two weeks and wear protective gear.

German Agriculture Minister Julia Kloeckner described the program as a "pragmatic and goal-oriented solution" that would bring up to 40,000 seasonal workers into the country in April and 40,000 more in May. The government hopes to recruit an additional 20,000 during the two months among people in Germany who are unemployed, students or resident asylum-seekers, the minister said.

"This is important and good news for our farmers," Kloeckner said. "Because the harvest doesn't wait, and you can't delay sowing the fields."

Farmers had brought in some 20,000 workers before virus-related travel bans were imposed, and Germany has extended the time seasonal workers are allowed to stay from 70 days to 115 days, Kloeckner said at a press conference at a Frankfurt-Hahn airport.

The government will work with farmers along the way to determine if more needs to be done, she said. "We will need to always reevaluate the situation and then act, and act quickly," she said.

Ahead of time, interested workers have to register online and have their information checked by federal police. Farmers needing help register online with the airlines contracted to bring the workers in, saying when they're needed and where.

So far, 9,900 people had registered for April and another 4,300 for May.

Flights are then organized to bring in groups, and the first group of workers, 530 people from Romania, arrived on Thursday in Duesseldorf and Berlin, said Eurowings, the airline contracted for the initial group of workers. Further flights were already planned to Duesseldorf, Karlsruhe, Leipzig, Nuremberg and Frankfurt.

Nicoleta, another worker waiting to board a plane in Cluj who did not want to give her last name, said she had traveled to Germany every fall for the last seven years to help make Christmas decorations. With everything uncertain due to the pandemic, she said she leapt at the opportunity to work on an asparagus farm instead.

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"We are happy we can go work in Germany" she said. "It is an opportunity. I can go there to earn enough to properly raise my two little children.

Other countries in Western Europe have taken different approaches, like in France where authorities and the agricultural sector have launched a call for local residents to help in the fields, called "arms for your plate."

Spain is trying to prevent a critical shortage of workers for its important agriculture industry in its sunny south, which helps feed the nation as well as providing Europe with exported fruit and vegetables.

Earlier this week, the government launched a campaign to try and find 75,000 residents to help, and extended seasonal migrants' work permits.

"If we do not harvest this produce, we will see a drop in our ability to supply our markets, and (that) could increase prices," said Spanish Agriculture Minister Luis Planas.

Kloeckner, the German minister, cautioned that with the additional costs to fly in the seasonal workers, Germany will also likely see an increase in the cost of fruit and vegetables.

"We live in very challenging times," she said.

This version has been corrected to show surname of quoted worker is Hopulele, not Hopulete.

Raul Stef in Cluj, Romania, Angela Charlton in Paris and Joseph Wilson in Barcelona contributed to this report.

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

Night lights at school fields across nation a 'sign of hope'

By DAVE CAMPBELL AP Sports Writer

The virus outbreak weighed heavily on Brett Beesley's heart and mind as the Dumas High School principal drove past the stadium along the main highway in his Texas Panhandle town.

Seeking to brighten the spirit of his suddenly disconnected students in a gloomy and frightening time, he made a decision. They should turn on the lights.

"To let them know that we're thinking about them and we miss them and we love them," said Beesley, who quickly called football coach Aaron Dunnam with his idea.

Dunnam didn't wait for their conversation to end before climbing into his car to head to the field and do the honors back on March 24 during the first full week of closed schools in Texas.

"I had chills running down my arms, running down my body," said Dunnam, who has flipped the switch each weeknight at 8 p.m. since for an hour of hope and encouragement.

Nearly as fast, the symbolic act became a movement — fueled by social media with the hashtag #Be-TheLight — across the country.

"I just love the focus to be on kids of this nation now," said Beesley, who used Twitter to challenge other Texas schools to follow suit.

Dunnam's oldest daughter, Lyssa, is the top-ranked powerlifter in Texas, a senior who likely won't get to compete for a state title this spring. She joins her dad every night at the stadium.

"This has probably been the hardest situation I've had to deal with because I don't have all the answers for her," Dunnam said.

It's fitting this originated in Texas, the home of the book, movie and television series "Friday Night Lights" about the windswept oilfield towns where high school football shapes both culture and community. As the author H.G. Bissinger wrote, "It could be anywhere in this vast land, where on a Friday night, a set of spindly stadium lights rises to the heavens to so powerfully, and so briefly, ignite the darkness."

The goal was to provide a beacon for all students in the district, not just the seniors or the athletes. Leaving the lights on for an hour costs adds \$25 to the electric bill, Beesley said.

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"I didn't think the taxpayer would mind too much if it meant giving our kids some hope," he said.

Adam Bright, an assistant commissioner at the Colorado High School Activities Association, discovered the ritual on Twitter and shared the news. More than 80 schools have joined.

Christopher Noll, the athletic director for District 11 in Colorado Springs, challenged coaches, teachers and administrators to place a combined 1,000 phone calls to families simply to be supportive during the shutdown. The total for that first effort was 1,728 calls and the number was put up in glowing orange numbers on the stadium scoreboard.

"I'm a huge believer that positivity is contagious," said Noll, who produced a 14-minute video on Monday night inside an illuminated and vacant Garry Berry Stadium in Colorado Springs.

In Minnesota, the mother of a senior lacrosse player at Centennial High School pointed out the trend in Texas to activities director Brian Jamros, who first flipped on the lights March 30 in Circle Pines, a suburb north of the Twin Cities.

"As you get older, it brings you back in time, what it means to be that student athlete representing your community," Jamros said. "Even for those with no affiliation to athletics or Centennial, there's this metaphor that there's light at the end of the tunnel."

The next morning, Minnesota State High School League information specialist John Millea sent out the clarion call to his 23,000-plus Twitter followers for schools to participate. Less than a week later, he stopped counting at 236, roughly half of the state's high schools.

Most have chosen Mondays or Fridays for the lighting, often for 20 minutes to commemorate the class of 2020. Some turned the event into a parade of first-responder vehicles in tribute to emergency workers. Others pushed play on a recording of the school fight song.

"At some point we're going to be under these lights again, gathering together as a community," Millea said. "To me, it's like the ultimate sign of hope."

Campbell reported from Minneapolis. AP Sports Writers Schuyler Dixon in Dallas and Pat Graham in Denver contributed to this report.

US economy unlikely to recover as rapidly as it collapsed

By JOSH BOAK AP Economics Writer

BALTIMORE (AP) — President Donald Trump has been telling voters that the U.S. economy will leap back to life "like a rocket," stronger than ever after its bout with the coronavirus.

But there is a reason economics is called the "dismal science." There are emerging signs that any recovery will fail to match the speed and severity of the economic collapse that occurred in just a few weeks. The 2020 presidential and Senate elections likely will take place as the world's largest economy is still attempting to climb back from the deadly outbreak.

"Anyone who assumes we're going to get a sharp snapback in activity isn't thinking about how consumers are going to feel. They're going to be very cautious," said Nariman Behravesh, chief economist at IHS Markit. "Households and businesses have seen their finances deteriorate. People are buying groceries on their credit cards."

To understand the consequences of a sudden negative shock on the economy, Behravesh studied how many people returned to flying after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

"It took two and a half years for airline passenger traffic to go back to previous levels," he said.

No longer able to campaign on a half-century low unemployment rate, Trump has begun to tell voters that he can quickly rebuild the economy. He said measures like the \$2.2 trillion rescue package — with more money likely on the way — can send employment and economic growth to new highs.

Jefrey Pollock, a Democratic pollster, said voters will judge in November whether the Republican president has delivered an economic revival, and they will be taking a similar measure of incumbent members of Congress.

"The fact that we're as partisan as ever doesn't mean we're destined to forgive a president who fails

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on the economy," Pollock said. "This is a man who championed his economic abilities — and to me there is nothing to suggest that voters will forgive him, since he's been front and center on the virus response since Day One."

If his view holds, that plays to the advantage of likely Democratic nominee Joe Biden. But Biden will have to give voters a fuller idea of how he would boost the economy, Pollock said.

Trump has repeatedly sought to portray the situation as the U.S. economy being sideswiped by the "hidden enemy" of COVID-19, which he and his advisers initially downplayed in February and March and later suggested was impossible to foresee. His message to voters is that his leadership will make the economy even stronger.

"Our Economy will BOOM, perhaps like never before!!!" Trump declared Wednesday on Twitter.

Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin, who has been leading the stimulus efforts, has said there will be "a very big bounce back," though he noted that the gains could be uneven.

"Certain parts of the economy you're going to see come back immediately," Mnuchin said Tuesday on the Fox Business Network. "Certain things are going to take a little bit longer."

One of the arguments for a quick recovery came from the Harvard University economist Larry Summers, who served as a top economic adviser to President Barack Obama during the Great Recession. He suggested on Twitter that the U.S. economy would behave much as a beach town on Cape Cod, which closes in the winter and reopens around Memorial Day for a burst of summer activity.

Adding to the challenge is that political leaders cannot simply command an economic recovery to occur. The timing depends on the shared actions of millions of consumers and employers, said Paul Winfree, a former Trump White House official who is now director of economic policy at the conservative Heritage Foundation.

"I don't think we're going to get out of this because of political leadership," Winfree said in an email. "This isn't WWII. Rather, things won't turn around until a significant majority of people decide that we've done enough (privately and publicly) and have to move along. Hopefully, that coincides with the success of public health efforts."

A strong economic rebound likely depends on people and companies being able to preserve their money, so that it can be spent and invested once the gloom begins to subside. The challenge now is that incomes are eroding, and that could limit the recovery.

Not only have 16.8 million Americans — roughly 1 in 10 workers — lost their jobs in the past three weeks. Workers have seen their hours slashed, have seen sales commissions disappear and have accepted salary cuts, such that incomes have declined for half of U.S. working households, according to a survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Children can no longer attend school, reducing the productivity of their parents. And on a regional basis, many state economies may take time to claw back what has been lost. Florida will need to bring back roughly 130 million tourists annually. The decisions of Texas employers will likely depend on crude oil — trading on Thursday for around a low \$25 a barrel — climbing back above \$30 to a point at which drilling and pumping is profitable.

Stanford University economist Nicholas Bloom is an expert on uncertainty and believes the economy will end this year 10% smaller than it was at the start of 2020, a loss of nearly \$2 trillion even with the \$2.2 trillion rescue package.

The long-term outlook also has deteriorated, he added, in ways that could hurt the recovery.

"Working from home is creating a collapse in investment," Bloom said. "All firms I have spoken to have canceled training, new product introductions and R&D projects, while at U.S. universities and laboratories unless you are working on COVID-19 you have stopped work. So innovation — the main driver of long-run U.S. growth — has stopped."

Bloom has personally responded to the decline in an ominous way. He said he pulled his retirement funds and college savings from the stock market and placed them in interest-bearing accounts to wait out the storm.

5 things to know today - that aren't about the virus

By The Associated Press undefined

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

1. FEDS DENY ALLEGATIONS FROM LOUGHLIN: Federal prosecutors are denying allegations that investigators deliberately withheld and fabricated evidence to entrap actress Lori Loughlin, her fashion designer husband, Mossimo Giannulli, and other prominent parents charged with cheating the college admissions process.

2. MOSCOW RETIREMENT HOME FIRE KILLS 4: A fire in a retirement home in Moscow has killed four people and injured 16 others but emergency officials say firefighters managed to rescue 50 people from the burning building.

3. STAGE IS SET FOR NOVEMBER: A general election campaign between Donald Trump and Joe Biden will almost certainly be the most expensive and among the nastiest in U.S. history.

4. NEANDERTHAL STRING: Scientists have found the first direct evidence that Neanderthals could make string. A white splotch on a Neanderthal stone tool turned out to be a tiny length of string, made by weaving together bundles of fiber from the inner bark of trees.

5. 'HOUSTON, WE'VE HAD A PROBLEM HERE' On the golden anniversary of the harrowing moonshot, Apollo 13's astronauts recall NASA's most successful failure when the mission was aborted by an oxygen tank rupture.

VIRUS DIARY: 'The most Passover of Passovers I've ever had'

By TALI ARBEL AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Every year, it's the same. I return to my childhood home in Phoenix for Passover, my favorite holiday, with my parents, sisters and our family friends, the Zvidas. For a quarter century, the Arbel-Zvida Seder has been my constant.

This year is different. We are all isolated, the dread of death a physical barrier. I've never been so anxious in my life. My chest constricts every time I hear a siren.

Amid all the sadness and fear, we made a plan. Everyone cooks what they like. A version of a Haggadah text was emailed. We would sync up via Zoom.

"Hopefully," my friend Eldan Zvida wrote to me, "it's the 1 and only zoom Seder we will ever have to experience."

Would it be just a sad replica of our usual meal, with his mom's brisket and the dozen-plus salads and sides made by her, my mom and my sisters and me? We wouldn't all be able to hug each other hello, laugh at the squirming babies, sing my favorite song at meal's end when we're all a little bit drunk. "Echad Mi Yodea" gets longer with each verse and leaves us all gasping for breath by the end as we pound the table in time.

Wednesday turned out to be the most Passover of Passovers I've ever had.

I "went" to not one, not two, but three virtual Seders; I baked matzah — unleavened bread crackers — for the first time in my life. (It was good! I don't think it was actually kosher, because it took me longer than 18 minutes and I added rosemary and oil to the flour and water, but God will forgive me.)

First, around noon New York time, I Zoomed into my Israeli family's dinner. It was a chaos of screaming children from my three cousins' homes, while my aunt and uncle had their meal alone. One cousin took us with him into the bathroom while he gave his crying toddler a bath; another's husband turned off the video and forgot to turn it back on.

It was beautiful.

In the evening, as I was dropping the matzah balls into their soup, I hopped into a huge Seder hosted by the family of my grandmother's dear friend Claire, a ninetysomething Holocaust survivor. The audio was a bit patchy and I was distracted with cooking, but I hung out for a few minutes.

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Then it was time for the main event. My sister Yael walked over from her apartment, three miles away, a calculated risk. I set the table with my grandmother's china. The seder plate, a serving platter from her china, had Chinese fried shallots instead of a shank bone, fig jam rather than charoset, and horseradish-flavored mustard instead of actual horseradish. More importantly, there was plenty of alcohol.

There were technical problems, yes. It took half an hour for everyone to make it to the Zoom. When we were assembled, there was a semblance of a structure. We read some blessings, put the fruit paste on matzah and dipped parsley in salt water.

What was not normal? We sang songs out of order, drank whenever we wanted rather than to the Haggadah's schedule, showed each other our separate tables, took a minute to say what we were thankful for — each other, technology, and love. My sister Dana's dog and my cat sometimes took over our screens. On New York time, Yael and I got hungry and started eating while the others waited. The Zvida grandkids in Phoenix turned on "The Lion King."

In all, we were together for an hour and 45 minutes. My chest pain evaporated. I was the happiest I'd been in weeks.

"Virus Diary," an occasional feature, will showcase the coronavirus saga through the eyes of Associated Press journalists around the world. Follow AP Technology Writer Tali Arbel on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/tarbel>

Rural Indiana virus worry: 'What more could I have done?'

By TOM DAVIES and DARRON CUMMINGS Associated Press

GREENSBURG, Ind. (AP) — The coronavirus pandemic surged into Sean Durbin's farm-speckled Indiana county much faster than most other parts of rural America, contributing to at least 10 deaths and dozens of serious illnesses.

Decatur County and two other counties in southeast Indiana have among the highest per-capita infection rates in the country, topping the Seattle area and some counties near hard-hit Detroit.

As Decatur County's public health preparedness coordinator, Durbin is working to stem the spread of the virus, even as he grieves the loss of a close friend to COVID-19 and stays apart from his wife so she can help with their new grandchild.

"Every death makes me question if I did enough," said Durbin, who is 57. "We have been ahead of everything the state has done in this county, and I still go to bed every night and ask, 'What more could I have done to protect this population?'"

Last Thursday, county officials banned nonessential travel and ordered all restaurants closed, including for takeout orders, going beyond the requirements of the governor's stay-at-home order that took effect March 25.

Decatur, Franklin and Ripley counties have a combined population of nearly 78,000 people and nearly 250 confirmed coronavirus cases through Wednesday, placing them among the top 100 counties for high infection rates across the nation, according to data tracked by Johns Hopkins University.

Health leaders can't pinpoint why the area has such a high infection rate. Some point to truckers stopping off from Interstate 74 — the main route between Indianapolis and Cincinnati — and locals who work in those cities. Or suggest it's linked to the young adults who have left their hometowns for jobs and schools in recent years.

"With this crisis in the big cities, we're seeing a lot of license plates from those other states showing up because they're coming back to mom and grandma and uncle Joe," said Dr. David Welsh, the Ripley County health officer.

There have been more than 20 COVID-19-related deaths in the three counties. At least two dozen patients are seriously ill, while others, including an 11-year-old child, have been recovering at home.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms that clear up in two to three weeks. Older adults and people with existing health problems are particularly susceptible to more severe illness,

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including pneumonia.

The three counties have older populations than Indiana as a whole, with more than 17% of residents older than 65, according to census information.

Decatur County officials imposed tougher travel and business restrictions after officials saw parents still taking their children grocery shopping and teenagers gathering in parking lots, Durbin said.

On the first day of the new rules, the streets in the county seat of Greensburg, population 12,000, were largely quiet, and few shoppers roamed the aisles of Walmart.

Greensburg resident Judith Corner said she believed people were taking the warnings seriously, and that she agrees with the precautions.

"I've had friends that are wearing their masks and gloves to the store," she said. "If we go for a walk, then we stay 6 feet apart."

Honda's 2,500-worker auto plant in Greensburg has been closed since March 23. A company spokesman said one contractor tested positive, and that person's colleagues have been notified.

The area's two hospitals, in Greensburg and Batesville, normally operate with 25 available beds each. Both have plans to more than double that capacity and treat more seriously ill patients as cases surge.

Dr. Wayne Perry, chief of staff at Decatur County Memorial, said his hospital has the same concerns as larger ones about the availability of testing, protective gear and ventilators. And he worries about the number of drivers he sees during his five-minute drive from home to the hospital.

"Until people see and really understand and appreciate the threat, then it's someone else's problem," Perry said. "These measures are so important. Our only fight against this right now is social distancing and following those guidelines."

The Indiana State Department of Health has been assisting with testing and tracking illnesses in rural areas, said Dr. Kristina Box, the state health commissioner. The agency is also trying to help rural hospitals obtain equipment.

Durbin has been staying away from his wife, including sleeping in a different room. They said their good-byes on Monday, when she headed to Cincinnati to help their daughter with their new grandson.

"Couldn't even give her a hug," Durbin said. "We'll just have to get used to that. That's the way of life these days."

Durbin said he's been healthy so far and will keep showing up at the four-employee Decatur County Health Department as long as he can. But he despairs at the prospect of not meeting his grandson for months and for the losses in the community where he's lived since he was a teenager.

"I know several of the people who have died. And if I don't know them, I know somebody who knows them," Durbin said. "So you see the grief. You see how it hits home. That would be the biggest difference than a big city — is that we all know each other. It's like somebody from your family dying."

Davies reported from Indianapolis. Associated Press video journalist Noreen Nasir in Chicago contributed to this report.

Justice delayed: Virus crisis upends courts system across US

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and MICHAEL TARM Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Courthouses shuttered. Thousands of trials on hold. Legal deadlines pushed.

The coronavirus pandemic has crippled the U.S. legal system, creating constitutional dilemmas as the accused miss their days in court. The public health crisis could build a legal backlog that overwhelms courts across the country, leaving some defendants behind bars longer, and forcing prosecutors to decide which cases to pursue and which to let slide.

"Everybody is scrambling. Nobody really knows how to handle this," said Claudia Lagos, a criminal defense attorney in Boston.

Judges from California to Maine have postponed trials and nearly all in-person hearings to keep crowds from packing courthouses. Trials that were underway — like the high-profile case against multimillionaire

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real estate heir Robert Durst — have been halted. Some chief judges have suspended grand juries, rendering new indictments impossible. Other have allowed them to sit, though six feet apart.

Prosecutors may have to abandon some low-level cases to keep people from flooding into the legal system.

Many judges are holding hearings by phone or video chat to keep all cases from grinding to a halt. Other courts are stymied by outdated technology. The clerk for the the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, Molly Dwyer, likened the logistical challenges to “building the bike as we ride it.”

Judges have asked for emergency powers to delay trials longer than the law generally allows and extend key deadlines, like when a defendant must initially appear in court.

That could keep people locked up longer, exposing them to unsafe jail conditions, and violate their constitutional right to a speedy trial, defense lawyers say.

“We shouldn’t be creating mechanisms in the current crisis to keep people in jail longer. The jails are just tinderboxes waiting for the virus to take off,” said Jeff Chorney, deputy public defender in Alameda County, California. Courts there now have seven days instead of 48 hours to hold arraignments, during which a defendant is often appointed a lawyer and can enter a plea.

The pandemic has shuttered nearly every aspect of everyday life as the death toll mounts and more states impose strict stay-at-home orders. There are nearly 400,000 cases and more than 12,000 deaths in the U.S., according to a tally kept by Johns Hopkins University.

Still, coast-to-coast disruptions of the courts system are unprecedented.

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina forced courts in New Orleans to temporarily close. The suspension of legal deadlines after the natural disaster left thousands languishing behind bars for months without formal charges, attorneys say. Lawyers there fear a repeat.

“On a regular day, without a crisis like Katrina and COVID, you can imagine people getting lost in a system like this,” said Alanah Odoms Hebert, executive director of the ACLU of Louisiana. “There will be a lot folks who fall through the cracks.”

No civil litigation is getting done. U.S. District Judge Steven Seeger in Chicago chafed at a recent request for an emergency order barring the alleged misuse of elf and unicorn drawings. “The world,” he said, “is facing a real emergency. (The) plaintiff is not.”

The COVID-19 disruptions are causing widespread confusion with prosecutors and defense attorneys as they struggle to file documents, get matters heard in courthouses operating on skeleton crews and share information with jailed clients while maintaining social distancing.

Lawyers for Elizabeth Holmes, head of the blood-testing startup Theranos scheduled to be tried this summer for allegedly defrauding investors, asked a California federal judge to also exempt them from the orders. They said the restrictions made witness preparation and serving subpoenas difficult. The judge refused.

Attorneys are wary of visiting their clients in jails for fear of contracting the virus or spreading it behind bars. They rely on phone calls, which in some places are recorded, limiting what they can say.

“You have to sort of chose between your safety and your client’s safety ... or their constitutional rights. It’s a really impossible situation,” said William Isenberg, a Boston defense attorney.

The haphazard operations could lead defendants to later challenge convictions, even if their lawyers did the best they could during the virus-related tumult.

Courthouse chaos may worsen when the shutdowns end, as judges try to return to old cases while fielding a burst in new cases. A flood of lawsuits linked to COVID-19 will add to the logjam.

“The courts are looking down the barrel of a real serious bottleneck,” said Jonathan Smith, executive director of the Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs. “I don’t think anybody has figured out what they’re going to do.”

Crime victims are also forced to wait. In Minnesota, the virus has postponed the federal trial of an Illinois militia leader accused of being the ringleader in the 2017 pipe bombing of a Minnesota mosque. Michael Hari’s trial was already postponed once. Now it’s scheduled for late July.

Mohamed Omar, executive director of the mosque, said community members want to see quick justice,

but that he understands the need for a delay.

"The safety of our community and those that are vulnerable are more important to us now more than any other thing," he said. "This is bigger than all of us."

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

Tarm reported from Chicago. Associated Press reporters Curt Anderson in Miami, Mike Balsamo in Washington and Amy Forliti in St. Paul, Minnesota contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to reflect that Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005, not 2004.

Tie game: Ancient bit of string shows Neanderthal handiwork

By MALCOLM RITTER AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — It looked like a white splotch on the underside of a Neanderthal stone tool. But a microscope showed it was a bunch of fibers twisted around each other.

Further examination revealed it was the first direct evidence that Neanderthals could make string, and the oldest known direct evidence for string-making overall, researchers say.

The find implies our evolutionary cousins had some understanding of numbers and the trees that furnished the raw material, they say. It's the latest discovery to show Neanderthals were smarter than modern-day people often assume.

Bruce Hardy, of Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, and colleagues report the discovery in a paper released Thursday by the journal *Scientific Reports*. The string hints at the possibility of other abilities, like making bags, mats, nets and fabric, they said.

It came from an archaeological site in the Rhone River valley of southeastern France, and it's about 40,000 to 50,000 years old. Researchers don't know how Neanderthals used the string or even whether it had been originally attached to the stone cutting tool.

Maybe the tool happened to fall on top of the string, preserving the quarter-inch (6.2 mm) segment while the rest perished over time, Hardy said. The string is about one-fiftieth of an inch (0.55 mm) wide.

It was made of fiber from the inner bark of trees. Neanderthals twisted three bundles of fibers together counterclockwise, and then twisted these bundles together clockwise to make the string. That assembly process shows some sense of numbers, Hardy said.

Paola Villa, a Neanderthal expert at the University of Colorado Museum who was not involved in the new study, noted that Hardy had previously found " tantalizing evidence" for string-making by Neanderthals. The new work now shows that directly, she said.

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.

'Houston, we've had a problem': Remembering Apollo 13 at 50

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Apollo 13's astronauts never gave a thought to their mission number as they blasted off for the moon 50 years ago. Even when their oxygen tank ruptured two days later — on April 13.

Jim Lovell and Fred Haise insist they're not superstitious. They even use 13 in their email addresses.

As mission commander Lovell sees it, he's incredibly lucky. Not only did he survive NASA's most harrowing moonshot, he's around to mark its golden anniversary.

"I'm still alive. As long as I can keep breathing, I'm good," Lovell, 92, said in an interview with The As-

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sociated Press from his Lake Forest, Illinois, home.

A half-century later, Apollo 13 is still considered Mission Control's finest hour.

Lovell calls it "a miraculous recovery."

Haise, like so many others, regards it as NASA's most successful failure.

"It was a great mission," Haise, 86, said. It showed "what can be done if people use their minds and a little ingenuity."

As the lunar module pilot, Haise would have become the sixth man to walk on the moon, following Lovell onto the dusty gray surface. The oxygen tank explosion robbed them of the moon landing, which would have been NASA's third, nine months after Apollo 11's Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin took humanity's first footsteps on the moon.

Now the coronavirus pandemic has robbed them of their anniversary celebrations. Festivities are on hold, including at Kennedy Space Center in Florida, where the mission began on April 11, 1970, a Saturday just like this year.

That won't stop Haise, who still lives in Houston, from marking what he calls "boom day" next Monday, as he does every April 13.

Lovell, Haise and Jack Swigert, a last-minute fill-in who died in 1982, were almost to the moon when they heard a bang and felt a shudder. One of two oxygen tanks had burst in the spacecraft's service module. The tense words that followed are the stuff of space — and movie — fame.

"OK, Houston, we've had a problem here," radioed Swigert, the command module pilot.

"This is Houston. Say again, please."

"Houston, we've had a problem," Lovell cut in.

Lovell reported a sudden voltage drop in one of the two main electrical circuits. Within seconds, Houston's Mission Control saw pressure readings for the damaged oxygen tank plunge to zero. The blast also knocked out two electrical power-generating fuel cells and damaged the third.

As Lovell peered out the window and saw oxygen escaping into the black void, he knew his moon landing was also slipping away. He shoved all emotions aside.

"Not landing on the moon or dying in space are two different things," Lovell explained, "and so we forgot about landing on the moon. This was one of survival. How do we get home?"

The astronauts were 200,000 miles (322,000 kilometers) from Earth. Getting back alive would require calm, skill and, yes, luck.

"The explosion could not have happened at a better time," Lovell said.

Much earlier, he said, and the astronauts wouldn't have had enough electrical power to make it around the moon and slingshot back to Earth for a splashdown. A blast in lunar orbit or, worse still, while Lovell and Haise were on the surface, "that would be the end of it."

"I think we had some divine help in this flight," Lovell said.

The aborted mission went from being so humdrum that none of the major TV networks broadcast the astronauts' show-and-tell minutes before the explosion, to a life-and-death drama gripping the entire world.

As flight director Gene Kranz and his team in Houston raced to come up with a rescue plan, the astronauts kept their cool. It was Lovell's fourth spaceflight - his second to the moon - and the first and only one for Haise and Swigert.

Dark thoughts "always raced through our minds, but silently. We didn't talk about that," Lovell said.

Added Haise: "We never hit the point where there was nothing left to do. So, no, we never got to a point where we said, 'Well, we're going to die.'"

The White House, less confident, demanded odds. Kranz refused, leaving it to others to put the crew's chances at 50-50. In his mind, there was no doubt, no room for failure — only success.

"Basically that was the name of the game: I'm going to get them home. My team's going to get them home. We will get them home," Kranz recalled.

For the record, Kranz never uttered "failure is not an option." The line is pure Hollywood, created for the 1995 movie "Apollo 13" starring Ed Harris as Kranz and Tom Hanks as Lovell.

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The flight controllers went into crisis mode. They immediately ordered the command module Odyssey shut down to conserve what little power remained, and the astronauts to move into the lunar module Aquarius, now a lifeboat.

One of the low points, Lovell said, was realizing they'd be cramped together in the lander.

"It was designed for two people for two days. We were three people for four days."

The carbon dioxide overload, from breathing, threatened to kill them.

Engineers scrambled to figure out how to convert the square air-purifying canisters in the dead capsule into round ones that would fit in their temporary home.

Their outside-the-box, seat-of-the-pants solution, using spacecraft scraps, worked. But it was so damp and cold that the astronauts couldn't sleep. Condensation covered the walls and windows, and the temperature was close to freezing.

Dehydrated and feverish, Haise had the roughest time during the six-day ordeal. Despite the sky-high stress, Haise recalls no cross words among the three test pilots. Even Swigert fit in, despite joining the crew a scant three days before liftoff. He replaced command module pilot Ken Mattingly, who with his crewmates had been exposed to German measles, but unlike them didn't have immunity.

Rumors swirled that the astronauts had poison pills tucked away in case of a hopeless situation. Lovell dispelled that notion on page one of his 1994 autobiography, "Lost Moon," the basis for the "Apollo 13" film.

Splashdown day finally arrived April 17, 1970 — with no guarantees.

The astronauts managed to power up their command module, avoiding short circuits but creating a rainfall inside as the spacecraft decelerated in the atmosphere.

The communication blackout lasted 1 1/2 minutes longer than normal. Controllers grew alarmed. Finally, three billowing parachutes appeared above the Pacific. It was only then, Lovell said, that "we knew that we had it made."

The astronauts had no idea how much their cosmic cliffhanger impacted the world until they reached Honolulu. President Richard Nixon was there to greet them.

"We never dreamed a billion people were following us on television and radio, and reading about us in banner headlines of every newspaper published," Lovell noted in a NASA history.

The tank explosion later was linked to damage caused by electrical overheating in ground tests.

Apollo 13 "showed teamwork, camaraderie and what NASA was really made of," said Columbia University's Mike Massimino, a former shuttle astronaut.

In the decades since, Lovell and his wife, Marilyn, of nearly 68 years have discussed the what-ifs and might-have-beens.

"The outcome of everything is, naturally, that he's alive," she said, "and that we've had all these years."

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.

Seeing sickness and death, paramedic fears the toll it takes

By BRIAN MAHONEY Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Travis Kessel never imagined his work could hurt this much.

The FDNY paramedic became hooked on helping people as a volunteer fireman in the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy in 2012, scrapping plans to study law in college and instead pursuing a career in emergency services.

It's given him a life — and a wife — he loves. She's an emergency room nurse and they met a few years ago when he brought a patient to the hospital where she worked in Queens.

Now, he worries about the toll it's taking on both of them and their colleagues, who are seeing sickness and death like never before.

"It really is an incredibly rewarding job and it's just, right now the stress of it and everything going on, it just eats away at you," Kessel said. "It eats you up a little bit every day."

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The Associated Press followed 10 New York City residents on Monday, April 6, as they tried to survive another day in the city assailed by the new coronavirus. For more, read 24 Hours: The Fight for New York.

Kessel's 12-hour shifts are now sometimes 16 hours or longer, as more and more first responders fall ill themselves. When possible, he'll finish at his station in the Bronx and pick his wife up outside her hospital in Manhattan, where he watches a steady stream of people who are giving their all and finding it isn't good enough.

"I see all these nurses and doctors and hospital staff coming out of the ERs and most of them are still wearing masks, but all you see is sadness in their eyes like as if they had lost relatives themselves," he said. "It's hard not to personalize these things."

Kessel, who turns 29 next week, has years of training and has done teaching himself. But no course could have prepared his crew for what they're seeing with the coronavirus, which has sent citywide emergency calls soaring — in some cases to more than 6,000 daily.

He used to respond to around five per day. Now that's doubling and sometimes tripling, often cardiac arrests or other serious situations from which there will be no recovery.

"It's the volume and the volume of these critical and dead patients that we've never seen before," Kessel said.

There's little downtime during work now, few places available to blow off steam afterward. He drove five hours round trip to the Jersey Shore on a day off Sunday so his wife could see her parents they urged to flee New York before things got really bad.

Then it was back to work for a 12-call Monday to begin what promised to be a bad week ahead.

"These next two weeks are going to be really trying," Kessel said. "I just hope that these projections are right and that we're going to start a downturn, because it takes its toll already and every day that goes by takes a little bit out of you that you don't know if you're going to get back."

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, April 10, the 101st day of 2020. There are 265 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 10, 1912, the British liner RMS Titanic set sail from Southampton, England, on its ill-fated maiden voyage.

On this date:

In 1815, the Mount Tambora volcano on the Indonesian island of Sumbawa exploded in one of the largest eruptions in recorded history, resulting in tens of thousands of deaths.

In 1865, Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee, a day after surrendering the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Court House, said farewell to his men, praising them for their "unsurpassed courage and fortitude."

In 1916, the Professional Golfers' Association of America was founded in New York.

In 1925, the F. Scott Fitzgerald novel "The Great Gatsby" was first published by Scribner's of New York.

In 1932, German President Paul Von Hindenburg was reelected in a runoff, with Adolf Hitler coming in second.

In 1947, Brooklyn Dodgers President Branch Rickey purchased the contract of Jackie Robinson from the Montreal Royals.

In 1966, English author Evelyn Waugh, 62, died in Combe Florey, Somerset, England.

In 1968, "In the Heat of the Night" won best picture of 1967 at the 40th Academy Awards; one of its stars, Rod Steiger, was named best actor while Katharine Hepburn was honored as best actress for "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner."

In 1971, a table tennis team from the United States arrived in China at the invitation of the communist

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government for a goodwill visit that came to be known as "ping-pong diplomacy."

In 1981, imprisoned IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands was declared the winner of a by-election to the British Parliament.

In 1998, the Northern Ireland peace talks concluded as negotiators reached a landmark settlement to end 30 years of bitter rivalries and bloody attacks.

In 2005, Tiger Woods won his fourth Masters with a spectacular finish of birdies and bogeys.

Ten years ago: Polish President Lech Kaczynski (lehk kah-CHIN'-skee), 60, was killed in a plane crash in western Russia that also claimed the lives of his wife and top Polish political, military and church officials. "Designing Women" co-star Dixie Carter, 70, died in Houston.

Five years ago: During the National Rifle Association's annual convention in Nashville, Tennessee, a succession of potential Republican presidential rivals slung criticism and cracked jokes about Democrat Hillary Rodham Clinton, who was expected to announce her White House candidacy. The Apple Watch made its debut.

One year ago: Holden Matthews, the white son of a sheriff's deputy, was arrested in connection with a string of fires that destroyed three black churches in rural Louisiana; authorities said his father helped arrange for his arrest. (Matthews pleaded guilty to federal and state criminal charges in February; sentencing is set for May.) Scientists released the first image ever made of a black hole, revealing a fiery, doughnut-shaped object in a galaxy 53 million light-years from earth.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Liz Sheridan is 91. Football Hall of Famer John Madden is 84. Reggae artist Bunny Wailer is 73. Actor Steven Seagal is 68. Folk-pop singer Terre Roche (The Roches) is 67. Actor Peter MacNicol is 66. Actress Olivia Brown is 63. Rock musician Steven Gustafson (10,000 Maniacs) is 63. Singer-producer Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds is 62. Rock singer-musician Brian Setzer is 61. Rock singer Katrina Leskanich (les-KAH'-nich) is 60. Actor Jeb Adams is 59. Olympic gold medal speedskater Cathy Turner is 58. Rock musician Tim "Herb" Alexander is 55. R-and-B singer Kenny Lattimore is 53. Actor-comedian Orlando Jones is 52. Rock musician Mike Mushok (Staind) is 51. Rapper Q-Tip (AKA Kamaal) is 50. Former Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens is 45. Actor David Harbour is 45. Blues singer Shemekia Copeland is 41. Actress Laura Bell Bundy is 39. Actor Harry Hadden-Paton is 39. Actress Chyler Leigh is 38. Pop musician Andrew Dost (fun.) is 37. Actor Ryan Merriman is 37. Singer Mandy Moore is 36. Actor Barkhad Abdi (BAHRK'-hahd AHB'-dee) is 35. Actress Shay Mitchell is 33. Actor Haley Joel Osment is 32. Actress Molly Bernard (TV: "Younger") is 32. Country singer Maren Morris is 30. Actor Alex Pettyfer is 30. Actress-singer AJ (AKA Amanda) Michalka (mish-AL'-kah) is 29. Actress Daisy Ridley is 28. Singer-actress Sofia Carson is 27. Actress Audrey Whitby is 24. Actress Ruby Jerins is 22.

Thought for Today: "Your actions, and your actions alone, determine your worth." — Evelyn Waugh (1903-1966).

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