

NEW JERSEY COVID-19 UPDATE

Governor Murphy's COVID-19 Mitigation Press Conference, September 11th, 2020

Governor Phil Murphy

September 11th

- On the 19th anniversary of 9/11, we recommit to the values of liberty and community upon which this nation was built.
- We are a nation of individuals, but, as the first words of our Constitution notes, we are “We the People,” and we rise as fall as one.
- We were knocked low 19 years ago today, but we got back up & showed the world how our nation comes together.
- With everything we've been facing over these past six months, this is the most pertinent of anniversaries, because we're now forced to marshal that inner strength again.
 - On 9/11, New Jersey Corrections Officer Chris Stanek was a member of one of the ambulance squads that responded to lower Manhattan.
 - In May, Chris was admitted to the hospital due to complications from covid-19. On Tuesday, after 111 days, he went home. We celebrate his life today.

Motor Vehicle Commission

- I signed two bills making updates to the Motor Vehicle Commission.
- One bill authorizes the MVC to use stored driver's license or identification card photos for longer than 8 years and limits certain appointment times at MVC locations to senior citizens and persons with certain medical conditions during the covid-19 pandemic.
- Another bill temporarily extends deadlines to register vehicles and obtain driver's licenses for new state residents during the public health emergency.

Contact Tracing

- We have added 66 new contact tracers for a total of 1,835 statewide.
- We have reached our goal of more than 15 contact tracers per county in almost every county except for Atlantic.
- We currently have nearly 21 contact tracers for every 100,000 residents.
- Our contact tracers' only job is to protect public health. Please cooperate with them when they call.
- Currently around 81% of people called answer the phone, but only 41% share contact information.

November Election

- University Hospital Newark has teamed up with [Vote-er.org](https://www.vote-er.org) to install a voter registration kiosk in the ER – the first hospital in New Jersey to do this!
- There's a direct connection between civic engagement and public health, and this kiosk is another step to ensuring a healthy democracy.
- You can also go to nj.gov/state/elections to look up if you're registered, register to vote, and set up an account to track your mail-in ballot.

The Numbers

New cases: 518

New statewide total: 195,888

Rate of transmission 9/9: 1.08

NJ spot positivity rate 9/7: 2.6%

Hospitalized: 482

Lab-confirmed positives: 240

Persons under investigation: 242

Requiring intensive care: 81

Require ventilators: 36

New deaths: 9

New statewide total deaths: 14,234

Total additional probable deaths: 1,789

Some individuals lost to COVID-19 honored today

- We remember Thomas Raslowsky, 68, of Milltown. Tom recently retired, and enjoyed fishing, riding his motorcycle and e-bike, playing with his granddaughter, and hanging out with his family. He is survived by countless loved ones.
- We remember Jim Judd, of Wyckoff, a Midwest transplant to our New Jersey family. Illinois born & raised, Jim moved to NJ when he took a job at the NYCE. He was successful in business, but his family was his true pride & joy.
- We remember William Rada of Bethlehem Township. Bill had a lifetime love of learning, and was a great music lover. He was always at his happiest surrounded by family and friends. In every sense, Bill was a scholar and a gentleman.

Economic Development Authority

- Pete Sandham is a partner in Sonic LLC, which operates four SportClips Haircuts locations. SportClips was hit hard by COVID19, but they secured more than \$20,000 in grants from the NJEDA to help pay the bills. We're honored to be their partner.

Chief administrator of the MVC Sue Fulton

- The most important metric for us during this public health emergency is the health and safety of our customers and our employees.
- Overall, our weekly numbers have been strong. We have been above our average from 2019 consistently for the last six weeks.
 - Average waits for road tests, driver's knowledge tests, and inspections are all down to pre-covid19 levels.
 - Inspection wait times are in what we would consider a normal range.
 - We have not seen the numbers that we expected, so we expect wait times to increase significantly toward the end of the month.
- Since March, we have taken a number of steps to make it easier to do your MVC business online, including expanding payment options.
 - Last year we did fewer than 40% of our registration renewals and 20% of our license renewals online, but now we are up to almost 70% and 55% respectively.
 - Yesterday, the Governor signed a bill that would bring even more transactions online.
- Who still has to visit in person?
 - New Licenses
 - Out of state transfers
 - CDL's that are federally regulated
 - Private sales of used cars

Department of Health Commissioner Judy Persichilli

Young People and Schools

- We continue to be concerned about transmission of the virus among young people.
 - We have continued to see case numbers climb among the ages of 19 -24 and this population now has the highest percent positivity in the state at 6%.
 - Right behind them is the 14-18-year-old age group with a percent positivity of 4%.
 - Percent positivity rates among other age groups is either remaining flat or declining.
- Socializing must be done safely.
 - Stay at least 6-feet away from each other, avoid sharing food and drink with others, wear a mask, and stay home when you're feeling sick.
- Although young people may not experience severe complications to the virus, they could spread it to more vulnerable populations.
- At this time, the department is not aware of any covid-19 cases associated with school attendance.
 - We are working with schools that have identified positive cases and are helping them with next steps.

Multi-System Inflammatory Syndrome

- We now have 57 cases. No new cases since last report.
 - The ages are between 1 – 18.
 - None are currently hospitalized.
 - All have either tested positive for covid19 or had positive antibody tests.
 - There have been no deaths.

Hospital and Resource usage

- 44% of critical care patients are on ventilators.
- Our spot positivity rate in testing is for September 7th is 2.6%. North was 2.46%, Central was 2.91% and the South 2.44%.

Deaths

- Demographic breakdown of deaths:
 - White 54.1%
 - Black 18.3%
 - Hispanic 20.3%
 - Asian 5.5%
 - Other 1.8%

Questions from the media

Are there contact tracers collecting information as to why people are refusing to cooperate with them?

Murphy: The overwhelming reason based on my understanding is that people don't want to rat out their kids or their friends.

Persichilli: People are concerned for their friends' welfare as well. They fear that their friends may need to leave work or quarantine for two weeks. They wonder how their kids will be fed and how they will be taken care of. That is why we have more staff available to give information on social support.

Senator Ruiz said it was shameful that your administration gave only \$150 million to the DOE, do you have any comment on that?

Murphy: I didn't see this comment although she has been an outstanding partner and a great leader in education. I'm a huge fan of hers, but I would say I don't see it that way.

Platkin: That amount was based on multiple surveys conducted statewide by the Department of Education. We are happy to consistently work with the legislature on that amount. The number specifically for the digital divide was based on a statewide survey of our school districts.

Do you know the number of positive tests in schools and are you going to make it public?

Murphy: We are currently not aware of any in-school transmission of covid. The system is working, as far as we can tell, so what you're seeing with schools doing the right thing is a great sign. We have talked about a way to put online a place to report these numbers.

The Borough of Franklin wants to give people the option to vote outside and socially distance, what are your thoughts on that?

Murphy: There is no prohibition against showing up on election day and voting. It happens to be a paper ballot which is the only difference.

Do you have any reaction or response to the New York Stock Exchange's reported proposal to move out of New Jersey if there is a tax on financial transactions?

Murphy: I'm not sure I would have put that out at 9 in the morning on 9/11 given the devastation that the financial sector suffered on 9/11 19 years ago. This is what you get for reaching out and trying to find common ground. That's the initial reaction I have. I like conceptually the concept and believe personally that there is an enormous value to them for proximity. We've begun a dialogue with them. It's not a forever thing.

Lt. Governor Oliver today said during a 9/11 ceremony that we will never defund the police. Do you agree with that?

Murphy: First of all, I don't know where I'd be without her. I completely understand the passion around this and the deepening of community engagement by our law enforcement has been a huge priority by everyone here. The way I've thought about it in the past is not just in isolation but also considering what we're doing with our surrounding community investments. To me, budgets are a measure of priorities.

Have you seen any evidence of false positives leading to the rise in cases?

Lifshitz: It's reasonable for people to be concerned about false positives. Some people may be getting tested and getting a positive even though it's not medically significant and sometimes there are issues that lead to occasional and rare false positives. Our tests are very sensitive. We're going to err on the side of safety to make sure people who are infectious are following the correct precautions.

Do drivers covered by the new law need a pin to renew licenses online? Where do people find the form to make an appointment and where do they file it? Will you extend licenses and other documents to the end of 2020?

Fulton: You do not need a pin to renew your license online. There is great latitude in the bill for how we set up the appointments for special times for senior citizens. All renewals can be done online so we don't anticipate extending the deadlines anymore.

Why not implement a statewide policy for how schools should handle an outbreak?

Murphy: They have broken the state down into regions, so it's not only about what's going on in a classroom and a school but also the community and the region. We reserve the right to take statewide action if it is warranted.

Lifshitz: When we put guidance together, we try to be general enough so people can understand what they should be doing but also not so prescriptive that a small elementary school in Cape May is treated the same as a big high school in Bergen because those are different environments. We break the state into different regions and publish every week a document letting them know how risk is in their region is. Based on that risk level, we let those schools know what they should do. We are always talking to local school districts and health departments to talk about the nuance in individual schools.

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