

Gov. Cuomo releases 'NY Forward Reopening' plan; Poloncarz, Wydysh provide county updates

'NY Forward Reopening' plan, regional monitoring dashboard at <https://forward.ny.gov/>

Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo on Monday announced that, as of today, the Finger Lakes, Southern Tier and Mohawk Valley Regions have met all seven metrics required to begin phase one of the state's regional phased reopening plan when "New York State on PAUSE" orders expire on May 15. If the trend continues, starting on May 15, these three regions can begin opening businesses for phase one, which includes construction; manufacturing and wholesale supply chain; retail for curbside pickup and drop-off or in-store pickup; and agriculture, forestry and fishing.

Links for the guide to the state's "NY Forward Reopening" plan and the state's regional monitoring dashboard can be found on this newspaper's website, www.wny.com.

The governor also announced that certain low-risk business and recreational activities will be ready to reopen statewide on May 15, including landscaping and gardening; outdoor, low-risk recreational activities such as tennis; and drive-in movie theaters.

"We are starting a new chapter in the fight against this virus – we've worked together as a state to flatten the curve and the decline has finally reached a point where it is just about where we started this journey, so now we can turn to reopening," Cuomo said. "As we approach May 15, we have put regional 'control rooms' in place, which are made up of the top government officials and academic and health care professionals in that region, to watch the situation in each region develop and increase or decrease the activity and speed of reopening based on the metrics and guidelines. These

'control rooms' are critical, because we just made it over the mountain and nobody wants to go back to the other side now."

Cuomo announced the members of the regional control rooms who will monitor regional metrics during the reopening process. These regional control rooms will monitor the hospitalization rate, death rate, number of new hospitalizations, hospital bed capacity, ICU bed capacity, testing and contact tracing within its region during reopening, and alert the state if the region's metrics no longer meet the reopening guidelines and adjust the reopening plan for that region accordingly.

Two Western New York leaders – Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz and Niagara County Legislature Chairwoman Becky Wydysh – are on the committee.

In a YouTube update Monday, Poloncarz said, "Western New York has met five of the seven metrics, pursuant to the date that was received from Western New York. ... The two things that we have not yet met, which is our hospitalization declines, over a 14-day period or a three-day average, as well as hospitalization deaths over a 14-day period or an average."

He explained, "It's up to the hospitalization numbers, and the deaths. And that's something that none of us control individually, but we as a community do control by continuing to reduce the spread, especially those among vulnerable groups."

Poloncarz said a May 15 reopen "might be a little tight."

"No matter what, I do believe we would open by June 1," he noted.

He emphasized, "There was

Regions must meet 7 metrics in order to reopen:

1. 14-day decline in hospitalizations OR under 15 new hospitalizations (3-day avg)
2. 14-day decline in hospitalized deaths OR under 5 new (3-day avg)
3. New hospitalizations — under 2 per 100k residents (3-day rolling avg)
4. Share of total beds available (threshold of 30%)
5. Share of ICU beds available (threshold of 30%)
6. 30 per 1k residents tested monthly (7-day average of new tests per day)
7. 30 contact tracers per 100K residents or to meet current infection rate.

As of Thursday morning, Western New York had met five of the seven metrics (No. 3 through No. 7).

a question that was brought up could we reopen between May 15 and June 1, and the answer is yes. So, if after a week, following May 15, it appeared that we've met the standard and the state approved it, yes, we could reopen on May 22, May 23.

"It all depends on those hospitalization numbers and what we can do to reduce them – and we're all in this together to help reduce that."

In her afternoon update on LCTV, Wydysh said, "I think it's important to underscore a point here that the governor has made: Whether we like it or not – he's been very specific about this – no county will reopen on its own. We will be opening as a region; there's not a county by county plan."

She added, "There are going to be many changes in the next coming weeks. ... Understand that May 15 is not a date where we will simply flip the switch, if you will, and fire everything back up all at once. That all needs to be done in the phases, as the governor talks about."

On Monday morning, Wydysh told a group of River Region leaders, "I would imagine, based on the pieces they're telling us, that we're looking probably at being two weeks after the first group of regions. And then each phase – he talks about the four different phases, different industries being included in each one – will happen in two-week increments after you've started the process."

"However, those phases are based on your metrics still being met throughout that time. So, as you add more people into the workforce, if your numbers start to go back up, if your hos-

Phased Reopening of Businesses

- Phase 1**
 - Construction
 - Manufacturing and wholesale supply chain
 - Retail – curbside pickup
 - Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing
- Phase 2**
 - Professional Services
 - Finance and Insurance
 - Retail
 - Administrative Support
 - Real Estate/Rental Leasing
- Phase 3**
 - Restaurants/Food Services
 - Hotels/Accommodations
- Phase 4**
 - Arts/Entertainment/Recreation
 - Education

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pitals are starting to have a problem, they will scale back on those phases and what they're letting you reopen.

"So, best-case scenario, I think we're looking probably at two weeks out before we can do phase one, which puts us end of May/early June. From there, phase two, mid-June; three at the end of June; four, mid-July.

"These summer events that everyone's trying to plan – very difficult. It's not that we won't necessarily be allowed to have them – maybe in August or September – but the planning piece is very difficult for the organizations. So, I know that's hard for everybody right now."

She added, "These edicts come from the governor and all we can do is do our best to make sure we're meeting the guidelines; following everything that he's asking of us to be met."

What Businesses Can Do

Poloncarz said, "Every business that is to reopen has to have a plan to safely protect their employees, as well as any patrons, depending on what type of business they are. So, it is incumbent upon every business to come up with a plan.

"I am expecting New York state to release, this week, a template for businesses to show exactly what they want."

He noted, "My call yesterday with the governor's office, they informed us that every business not only has to have the plan, they have to make it available for their employees to review, as well as any patrons."

He added, "If you do not have that plan, you cannot reopen. It's as simple as that. So, if you're a manufacturer, even if you've got three employees, you got to come up with a plan; because if your employee says, 'I'd like to see your plan, Mr. or Mrs. employer,' and you don't have one, you can't open."

"As the governor noted earlier today, the localities are responsible for compliance.

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